



COALITION GOVERNMENTS IN INDIA: AN EVALUATION OF UNITED PROGRESSIVE ALLIANCE GOVERNMENT - I

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*Dedicated
To My
Beloved Parents*

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Certificate

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the dissertation “**Coalition Governments in India: An Evaluation of United Progressive Alliance Government-I**” submitted for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy in the Department of Political Science is based on my original research work and the dissertation has not been presented for any other degree of this University or any other University or Institution and that all sources used in this work have been thoroughly acknowledged.

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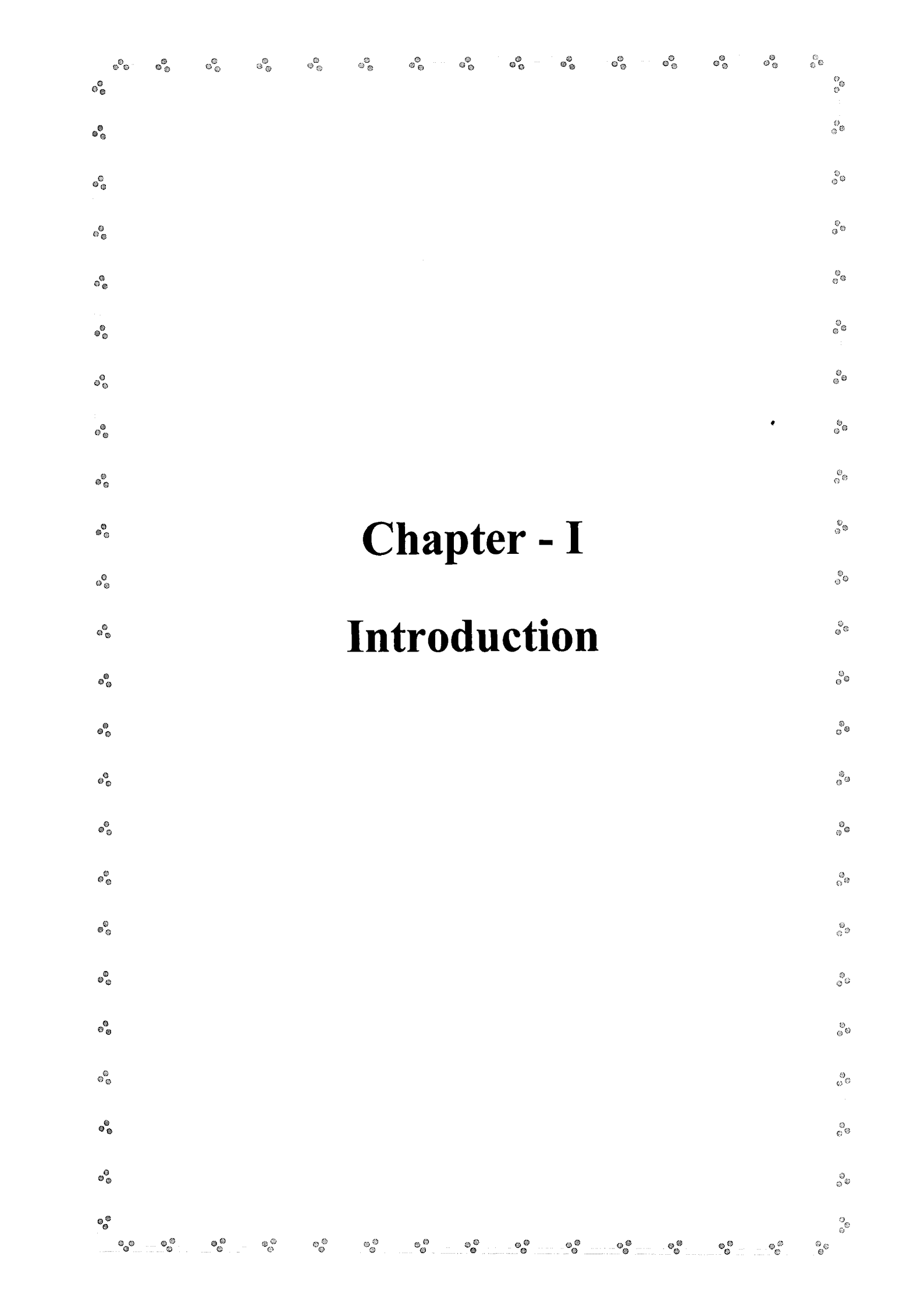
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AGP	-	Assam Gana Parishad
AIADMK	-	All India Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
AICC	-	All India Congress Committee
BJD	-	Biju Janata Dal
BJP	-	Bharatiya Janata Party
BLD	-	Bharatiya Lok Dal
BSP	-	Bahujan Samaj Party
CFD	-	Congress for Democracy
Congress (I)	-	Congress (Indira)
Congress (O)	-	Congress (Organization)
Congress (R)	-	Congress (Ruling)
CPI (M)	-	Communist Party of India (Marxist)
CPI (M-L)	-	Communist Party of India (Marxist – Leninist)
CPI	-	Communist Party of India
DMK	-	Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
FB	-	Forward Bloc
HVP	-	Haryana Vikas Party
IAEA	-	International Atomic Energy Association
INDF	-	Indian National Democratic Front
INLD	-	Indian National Lok Dal
IUML	-	Indian Union Muslim League
JD (S)	-	Janata Dal (Secular)
JD(U)	-	Janata Dal (United)
JP	-	Janata Party
KC (M)	-	Kerala Congress (Mani)
LF	-	Left Front
MDMK	-	Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
MPVC	-	Madhya Pradesh Vikas Congress
MSDP	-	Multi Sectoral Development Programme
NAC	-	National Advisory Council
NAG	-	National Agenda for Governance
NC	-	National Conference

NCMP	-	National Common Minimum Programme
NCP	-	Nationalist Congress Party
NDA	-	National Democratic Alliance
NDP	-	National Democratic Party
NF	-	National Front
PDP	-	Peoples Democratic Party
PEPSU	-	Patiala and east Punjab States Union
PMK	-	Pattali Makkal Katchi
PSP	-	Praja Socialist Party
PULF	-	People's United Left Front
RJD	-	Rashtriya Janata Dal
RLD	-	Rashtriya Lok Dal
RSS	-	Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh
SAD	-	Shirmani Akali Dal
SP	-	Samajwadi Party
SRP	-	Socialist Republican Party
SS	-	Shiva Sena
SSP	-	Samyukta Socialist Party
SVD	-	Samyukta Vidhayak Dal
TDP	-	Telugu Desam Party
TMC	-	Tamil Manila Congress
TRC	-	Tamizhaka Rajeev Gandhi Congress
TRS	-	Telengana Rashtriya Samiti
UDF	-	United Democratic Front
UF	-	United Front
ULF	-	United Left front
UN	-	United Nations
US	-	United States
VHP	-	Viswa Hindu Parishad

A decorative border composed of small, stylized circular icons, possibly representing atoms or molecules, arranged in a rectangular frame around the central text.

Chapter - I

Introduction

Political parties are inevitable in a democracy. No free large country has been without them. They link the sovereign people to the legislature and executive. They are the most significant mechanisms in a democratic government. Infact, the working of any system of representative government is determined by nature of the political parties which operates it. Political parties and the party system in India have been greatly influenced by cultural diversity, social, ethnic, caste, community and religious pluralism, traditions of the nationalist movement and clashing ideological perspectives. As the framers of the Indian Constitution were aware about the pluralistic nature of Indian society, they preferred multi-party parliamentary democracy in India. Therefore, the framers of the Indian Constitution were aware of the plural nature of Indian society hence, preferred a multi-party parliamentary democracy. Although multi-party system was prevalent from the very beginning in Indian Republic but presence of the Congress as dominant party overshadowed the importance of other political parties both at the centre and in the states. Before the independence, the Congress spearheaded the national movement under which the people of different beliefs and backgrounds came together. The Sawraj Party, the Socialist Party and for a long time, even the Communist Party were within the Congress.¹ In short, the Congress Party acted as the umbrella party which was characterized by its consensual and coalitional nature. Therefore, this led scholars like Rajni Kothari and Morris Jones to characterize the party system of post-independence era as one-party dominance. Rajni Kothari says, "The Indian system can be described as a system of one party dominance, which it may be noted, is very different from what is generally known as a one party system. It is a competitive party system but one in which the competing parts play rather dissimilar roles."²The all embracing character of the Congress Party anchored the Indian party system and maintained stability of the political system. The domineering character of the Congress Party started to decline after the 1967 general election and the other political parties begin to assert themselves, and started to play a role in the formation of coalition governments at state level. The multi-party system got manifested particularly at state level but it had affected the behavior of political parties at central level as well.

In a multi-party system political parties compete against each other for acquisition of power. In such a situation there are two possibilities; either a single party gets absolute majority and forms the government or of coalition government in case no party gets majority. So the coalition is a process in multi-party parliamentary democracy when no single political party secures majority or two more political parties unite to form the majority government in parliament or state legislature. Etymologically, speaking the word coalition has descended from the Latin word '*Coalitio*' which means to go together or to grow together. It is a temporary alliance among the various political parties for the exercise of political power.³ Coalition is product of politics in parliamentary democracy. The term as it is generally used in political science is direct descendant of the exigencies of a multi-party system in a democratic set up.⁴ Coalition Politics is common phenomenon in a multi-party democracy and became unavoidable in the following three situations.⁵

- (a). When in a multi-party parliamentary democracy the election verdict is fractured and did not mandate any single political party to form government.
- (b). During the national crises when the nation demands unity on the part of political parties so as to thwart the national crises.
- (c). When a deadlock exists between two political parties in a bi-party system, i.e., an even balance between the two parties, leading one of the two to ally with any minor group such as a neutral or defector.

As for as the above situations are concerned, the first situation have occurred frequently in India since 1989 and continued till 2009. Multi-party system in India is a reflection of plural nature of Indian society, where electorates are divided on different lines such as different ideological orientations, caste preferences, regional and religious aspirations etc. However, due to the emergence of coalition governments this plural nature of the Indian society got also reflected in the governing structure, which made the Indian political system more inclusive and encompassing. Norman D. Palmer remarks:

Coalition arise out of the structure of Indian society i.e. communalism, regionalism, lingualism, casteism. Division between north and south, between regional and linguistic groups, between literate and the illiterate, between villagers and towns people, between communal and caste groups, have a profound effect on political life and behavior. This vast disparity doesn't invite two party systems but a multi-party coalition government.⁶

Coalition politics is a phenomenon of a multi-party government where a number of distinct political parties came together to form a government. While entering a coalition government, coalition partners gave up their rigid stands and agreed upon a Common Minimum Programme which set forth the policy priorities of a coalition government by accommodating the policy stands of all the coalition partners. Therefore, the political parties while entering a coalition government follow the principle of give and take. While entering a coalition arrangement a political party doesn't lose its identity rather it remained intact. A political party can withdraw from the coalition arrangement when it finds difficult to continue as a partner and can join a new group for the new coalition arrangement.

Although the multi-party system was prevalent from the very beginning in Indian Republic but systematically saying, it became manifested at the state level in 1967 and at the national level since 1989. Its surfacing at the national level since 1989 had accelerated and strengthened the federal arrangement of the Indian polity. Despite this, two new factors namely, the neo-liberal economic reforms that were introduced since 1991 and the pro-state autonomy shift in the judicial behavior particularly since the Supreme Court Judgment in S.R. Bommai case (1994), largely resurrected the federal spirit of Indian Constitution. Both these developments had occurred in the era of coalition governments. Now coalition governments have become a regular feature in India both at central level and also in some states. Although India had experienced first coalition government on 25th October, 1946 under the British Cabinet Mission Plan, when Jawahar Lal Nehru headed the Indian National Congress, Muslim League interim government in New Delhi which lasted for nine months. After India's independence, the Congress Party was the only party which had all Indian presence and commanded popularity and respect of the people. The dominance of the Congress Party was largely due to its all embracing and coalitional character. The Congress Party represented every section of the Indian society, thus helped it to dominate the electoral process both at the centre and at the states level.

Before, the 1967 general election, India witnessed wide spread transformation due to change in the socio-economic profile of the country and new political formations emerged. These new political formations made the political process more competitive and

the Congress Party couldn't accommodate with the new demands and hence lost power at state level to various political parties and party coalitions in more than half of the Indian states in 1967 general elections. However, the Congress Party managed to rule at the centre till 1977 when it was defeated by the coalition of opposition political parties named as Janta Party.⁷ The Janta government publicly asserted to restore Mahatma Gandhi's set principles of austerity, honesty and harmony in the public life.⁸ The slogan caught the imagination of the people and raised their hopes which ultimately resulted in the comfortable victory for the Janta Party. This was the first experiment of coalition government at the centre but this experiment couldn't sustain because of its internal contradictions. Although the Janta Party ousted the Congress Party out of the power in 1977 but it couldn't evolve consensus on how to provide a cohesive and stable government to the people and consequently the coalition government devoted most of its time in sorting out the internal contradiction. Therefore, the Janta government collapsed in 1979 due to the defection of various political parties. Although the Janta experiment was short lived, it laid the foundation of coalition government at the center and which became evident from 1989 onwards and continued till 2014. The coalition era again got visible at the central level when National Front, a minority government was formed in 1989 under the leadership of V.P Singh. The National Front government was supported from outside by the BJP and the Left Front which were naturally antagonistic to each other. The National Front government was fragile government from the very beginning. Internally, V. P. Singh had to contain Chandra Shekhar, Devi Lal, Ajit Singh and H.N. Bahuguna and externally, it had to maintain a balance between the BJP and the Left Parties. Furthermore, the major deficiency of the National Front government was the lack of Common Minimum Programme and it also didn't lay down the formal mechanisms to sort out the internal contradictions of the coalition government. Naturally, the coalition government didn't last too long and the delicate triangular balance upon which the viability of the National Front government rested was finally upset by the BJP when it pressed its view points on Ramjanmbhoomi-Babri Masjid controversy beyond the tolerance limits of the National Front and the Left Front.⁹ So the novel experiment failed to complete even one year of its term. However, the experiment helped the BJP to emerge

as the alternative to the Congress Party to constitute a responsible opposition as well as to form government at the centre.

Despite the failures of these coalition governments to sustain and to provide an effective government as an alternative to the Congress led governments, the subsequent election verdicts were fractured and didn't mandated any single party to rule. The choice of the people was clear for the coalition government. However, an important political change took place during that time was the mushrooming of the regional parties, and their impact on Indian politics became visible when they participated in the formation of the United Front government in 1996. The United Front government took the lesson from the failures of its preceding coalition governments and laid down the Common Minimum Programme by reconciling the policy priorities of the coalition partners. However, the United Front government did not brought the main outside supporting party i.e. the Congress into the coordination committee which resulted in lack of coordination between the Congress and the United Front, and it became the main cause for the down fall of the United Front government.

The Congress Party remained indifferent towards the alliance formation and considered the coalition politics an aberration and played the role of spoilers in the coalition governments, hence reduced it already declining social support. On the other hand the BJP understood the changing pattern of Indian society and its limited social support base, thereby entered into alliance with the regional parties. The BJP led NDA was the product of this understanding which was formed with the help of 24 political parties and which ruled the centre from 1999-2004. The experiment was novel in the sense that the communal party i.e. BJP had to soften its stand on issues like Ram Temple, Uniform Civil Code and on Article 370. This helped the BJP to attract the regional parties to be the part of the NDA coalition government which over the years was not possible due to its exclusive nature of politics. Besides this the Congress's inability to attract the regional forces for the alliances helped the BJP because the Congress Party was the main rival of the regional forces which had thrived due the decline of the Congress Party. This gave the BJP opportunity to build alliances with regional forces because the regional forces considered the BJP as viable partner then the Congress Party, due to the weak

position of the former in those states. The BJP anchored the NDA coalition government by laying down the National Agenda for Governance (NAG) which was the compromise document which gave framework for the governance to the new coalition government and more importantly, soften the non-saffron parties. Furthermore, the new coalition government led by the BJP laid down mechanisms to sort out the differences in the coalition government. Besides the NAG it established coordination committee to see the implementation of NAG and resolve the conflicts. In addition to this BJP understood the nature of the NDA coalition government, thereby laid down the mechanisms like Group of Ministers which worked as a coordination mechanism to resolve the differences of opinion and conflict in the cabinet. Despite this there were internal contradictions within the NDA at the national level and also at state level. However, it managed to complete its tenure and discarded the notion that coalition phase in Indian politics are aberration and coalition governments are by nature unstable. The NDA experiment set norms of coalition government which were called *coalition dharma*, which means following whatever had been agreed by the coalition partners in the Common Minimum Programme.

Since 1998, party system in India had entered into a new phase of loosely bipolar party system. In contemporary Indian politics elections are contested in alliances. In 1999, Lok Sabha election the BJP entered into right kind of alliances and successfully formed the government. The same pattern of alliance building also got visible in the 2004, Lok Sabha election, however, a significant development during this election was the Congress's preference for alliance building. The Congress Party realized its weak organizational strength and declining mode, thereby build alliance with regional forces in Bihar, Maharashtra, Jammu and Kashmir, and Jharkhand. On the other hand BJP failed to adjust with some old allies and prefer to contest election in some states likes Assam, Haryana, and Jharkhand on its own, which proved to be disaster for it. The election results in 2004 didn't depict anything new rather it was the clear mandate for the coalition government. The Congress Party emerged as the single largest party with 145 and its pre-poll alliance climbed up to 217 seats. Therefore, the NDA government was replaced by the Congress led UPA-I government which consists of fourteen parties, some

of them were DMK,MDMK, PMK, TRS, RJD, PDP, IUML, NCP etc.The government also got outside support of CPI (M) led Left Front, which emerged as the third force in the election with 62 seats. The new coalition government framed the National Common Minimum Programme (NCMP) after studying the election manifestos of the coalition partners. The main aim of setting the NCMP was to evolve consensus on the policies to be pursued by the new government. The NCMP, acted as the road map for the new government and more importantly, the very outside support of the Left Front to the UPA-I government was based on this document. The very defeat of BJP led NDA largely helped in giving shape to the NCMP document. The UPA-I government took lessons from its predecessors and set-up mechanism for the implementation of NCMP. National Advisory Council was set-up which acted as a watch dog for the implementation of NCMP and also provides input to the government in policy formulation. In addition to this the government also established United Progressive Alliance Coordination Committee (UPACC) for the consultation and discussion and more importantly, it established UPA-Left Coordination Committee.

Despite the fact that UPA-I coalition constituents acted as a united front and defeated the communal forces in 2004 Lok Sabha election but they couldn't sustain the alliance in the subsequent assembly elections largely because of their regional interests. The Congress Party which had anchored the UPA-I coalition government was trying to revive its traditional support base. The contradiction in the party building and coalition government was the main cause which brought the UPA-I constituents in confrontation mode and helped the NDA to gain in the state assembly elections. The UPA-I failed to promote the social harmony and permitted the assembly elections to be fought by its allies on the basis of caste distinctions. It failed to uphold the rule of law when it misused the office of the governor in favour of its chances of forming governments in the states. Opposition to the BJP and other obscurantist element was lost sight of when the objective of major political parties of the alliance became the defeat of their own partners, thereby, helping their common opponent to win more seats.¹⁰ Therefore, the UPA-I governments constituents at the seat of power in Delhi remained united, progressive and allied but in the states the parties were disunited and unfriendly.

In spite of unanimity on the NCMP among the constituents of UPA-I there were challenges in terms of influence of the Left Fronts on economic policies and foreign policy of the government. The contradiction between the UPA-I government and the Left Front got reflected on wide range of economic policies particularly on disinvestment, liberalization and on foreign policy issues particularly on Indo-US nuclear deal. However, the National Advisory Council played a dominant role in sorting out the differences between the Left Front and the UPA-I government. But on Nuclear deal both the Left Front and UPA-I government couldn't evolve a consensus and it was on 8th July 2008 that UPA-I government was reduced to minority when the Left Front withdrew its support, ending four years of often uneasy alliance with the government. However, in 2009 general election, again UPA made a landslide victory and formed a consensual based coalition government at the centre.

Objectives of the Study

The study aims at attainment of the following objectives.

1. To look into the evolution of coalition government in India and to identify the reasons and circumstances in which coalition governments has become the virtual norm.
2. To examine the causes responsible for the coalition instability at the national level and how stability was ensured in the BJP led NDA coalition government and Congress led UPA-I.
3. To examine the causes of a fractured verdict in 2004 general election and consequent formation of the UPA-I coalition government.
4. To look into the reasons of conflict and contradiction among the constituents of the UPA-I coalition government.
5. To examine the domestic policies of the UPA-I government with special reference to minority development policies, employment guarantee act, reservation for the OBCs in higher education.
6. To examine the foreign policy of UPA-I government with special reference to relation with the USA, China and Pakistan.

In order to achieve the above cited objectives the following research questions have been framed.

1. How the Congress Party was able to maintain its dominance in the Indian electoral process at state level till 1967 and at national level up to 1989.
2. Why the coalition governments at the central level couldn't survive or maintain its stability when they unite against a common enemy during the Lok Sabha elections.
3. Why the BJP became more successful in forging alliance with the regional parties or state parties why Congress Party failed till 2004.
4. Whether 2004 Lok Sabha elections was different from the previous elections.
5. Whether Congress led UPA-I government was opportunistic alliance or office seeking.
6. How Congress led UPA-I government maintain its stability.
7. Why the Left Front withdrew its support to the UPA-I government on nuclear deal when it could have withdrawn, its support when UPA-I concluded the Indo-US defence deal.
8. Whether UPA-I government's foreign policy was different from the BJP led NDAs foreign policy.

Chapterisation

The whole work has been divided into the 6 chapters. Chapter I is an introductory part of this work.

Chapter II, entitled as, "**Evolution of Coalition Politics in India**", deals with the evolution of coalition politics in India. It traces out the origin of coalition politics from the very nature of the Congress Party and studies how the Congress Party through its coalitional character maintained its dominance in the electoral process till 1967 at state level and at national level till 1989. After analyzing the Congress's dominance period and its erosion at state level, the chapter proceeds to analyze how the nature of Congress Party under the leadership of Indira Gandhi underwent a change. The last section of the

chapter analyzes how the coalition governments were formed from 1989 and what were the rational for their formation and why they couldn't sustain. Furthermore, it also studies how stability was achieved in the coalition government under the BJP led NDA.

Chapter III, entitled as, **"2004 Lok Sabha Election and Formation of the UPA-I Government,"** begins with the analysis of the verdicts of 2004 general election and subsequent formation of the UPA-I government under the leadership of Dr. Manmohan Singh. It analyze the changing attitude of the Congress Party towards the coalition governance under the leadership of Sonia Gandhi and how it adjusted to the the realities of coalition politics. The chapter proceeds and analyse what were the major contradictions within the UPA-I coalition government and how the government co-existed with the Left Front whose very outside support was important for the survival of the government. The interesting aspect of the UPA-I government was the very nature of its existence because its constituents were the principle adversaries to each other at the state level. However, the co-existence became possible because the constituents of UPA-I were committed to keep the communal forces out of the power. Although they got united at national level, but they couldn't sustain this unity at the state level and remained in opposite camps in some states during the subsequent assembly election, hence gave the BJP led NDA chance to form government in some states.

Chapter IV, entitled as, **"Domestic Policies of the UPA-I Government,"** examines the domestic policies of the UPA-I government. The chapter begins with a brief summary of the domestic policies mentioned in the National Common Minimum Programme (NCMP) and then limits the scope of the study by examining the UPA-I government's Minority Development Policies, Employment Guarantee Act and the Reservation for the OBCs in Higher Education.

Chapter V, entitled as, **"Foreign policy of the UPA-I Government,"** examines the foreign policy of UPA-I government. The chapter in the introduction examines the changes that took place in the foreign policy of India after the end of cold war. Then a brief summary of the foreign policy priorities of the UPA-I government in NCMP is given. The chapter limits its scope by studying foreign policy of the government with special reference to relations with USA, with China and with Pakistan during its tenure.

Chapter VI entitled as “**Conclusion**”, deals with the brief summary and analysis of the previous chapters and will summarize the findings of the study.

Methodology

In this study, the descriptive and analytical methods have been adopted. Both the primary and secondary data have been utilized. Primary data consists of government reports, parliamentary debates and other related government documents. The secondary data consists of, books, journals, news papers, magazines and other relevant materials

Limitations of the study

No research on any topic can be considered complete in itself, as every research has its own limitations. It is difficult to cover every aspect of the present study in limited time and with limited resources and other related limitations. It was due to these constraints and limitations that only limited aspects of coalition politics in India: an evaluation of United Progressive Alliance government had been taken. The Study briefly examines the Evolution of Coalition Politics in India, and then in next chapter examines the 2004 Lok Sabha elections and formation of UPA-I government. The next two chapters will examine the policies of UPA-I government both domestic policies and foreign policy and in these limited policies have been examined. The other aspects of the study may be examined in future studies. I hope that the present study would make a substantial contribution in the relevant field.

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Chapter - II

Evolution of Coalition Politics

in India

Coalition politics is not a new phenomenon in Indian politics. India is a country of diverse identity groups and these identity groups had remained in coalition with each other since centuries. This social coalition is one of the significant features of Indian society. The All India National Congress spearheaded the national movement and reinforced this social coalition. India experienced its first coalition though at electoral level in 1937 between the Muslim League and the All India National Congress during the Provincial legislature elections, which were held under the 1935 Act. In this election Congress forged a tacit electoral understanding with the Muslim League when it (the Congress) was not sure about the decisive majority in United Province legislatures.¹ However, this pre-poll alliance couldn't sustain after the elections as the Congress Party refused to form coalition with the Muslim League. Before the independence Jawaharlal Nehru headed the first coalition government in 1946. It was coalition between the All India National Congress, the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League.² However, the departure of Muslim League from the Indian electoral process after independence reinforced the dominance of the Congress Party. After the independence the Congress Party dominated Indian electoral process both at the centre and at the state level for two decades through its coalitional character. The emergence of multi-party coalition politics in Indian today has its roots in the coalitional character of Congress Party. The Congress Party was an example of coalition politics par excellence. In order to understand the evolution of coalition politics at the centre in India it is desirable to divide it into following stage.

Politics of the Congress Dominance (1947-1967)

The Congress Party of India was unchallenged political force in first two decades after independence. This dominance was largely ensured by the all encompassing character of the Congress Party, Rajini Kothari said:

The Congress was a characteristic catch all party, trying to encompass all the more relevant segments of political reality, including great many oppositional segments. It was like a Hindu society in miniature, accommodative and agglomerative, given less to specificity and

differentiation and more to consensus and Catholicism. The Congress was a “grand coalition” with a great historic antecedents and itself representing the Indian-nation in most of its essential.³⁴

This diverse nature of the Congress Party was supplemented with internal competition. The unique feature of Indian political system in first two decades after independence was a party system characterized by “dominance co-existing with competition but without a trace of alteration.”⁵ This prevents opposition parties not to be much decisive factor in alteration of power. The role of opposition in the first two decade after independence was unique in the sense that instead of providing alternative to the Congress government it influences the factional groups within the Congress Party. The groups within the ruling party played the role of opposition.⁶ Therefore, opposition to the Congress government were at two levels, one at intra-party level that was inside the *margin* and second at inter-party level that was outside the *margin*.

The Congress Party penetrated deep in Indian society, through its organisational wing. The organisational wing of the Congress Party which had its legacy during freedom movement largely helped the Congress Party to maintain its dominance. As the Congress Party operated at two levels, at the governmental level it had command over resources and it was the organisation of the party which efficiently distributes these resources among existing and potential clients in exchange for their political support. This gives the Congress Party upper hand in bargaining and it was able to influence political decisions in the states and at district level.⁷ Despite the all embracing character and, organisational strength of the Congress Party the role played by political leadership in general and by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in particular was appreciable. Nehru hold the country together to arrest disruptive forces and take the road for reaching social change and modernisation and he deeply worked for this end.⁸ Under Nehru’s leadership the country stabilise itself by giving enough time to its institutions to strike roots, and he inculcate and strengthened the democratic values of equality, freedom and value of vote.⁹

The change in role of Congress from freedom movement to a political party developed internal contradiction between the governmental and organisational wing of the Congress Party. It was soon after independence that tussles for ascendance between the two wings of the Congress Party got surfaced on the issue of selecting the Presidential candidate for Republic of India. Nehru proposed name of Rajagopalachari, the

organisational wing led by Patel supported name of Dr Rajandar Prasad; ultimately the will of organisational wing prevails. The issue of electing the President for the Congress Party polarised the Congress Party again, Purshottam Das Tandon became the President of the Congress Party despite Nehru's opposition. A rift started to begin between Nehru and Tandon, when Nehru asked for the reconstitution of working group to Tandon but he refused. This led to the resignation of Nehru along with Maulana Azad. Therefore, Tandon had no option but to resign on AICC, special session in Nagpur held on 8-9 September 1951.¹⁰ This resignation consolidated the position of Nehru, both in the party organisation and in the government. Despite these internal contradictions the Nehru's leadership was never threatened because "...his challengers were comrades-in arm during freedom movement," says C P Bhambhri.¹¹

The Congress Party had dominated both the Parliament and the state legislatures by means of its large numerical strength in first two decades after independence. In reality it never won majority of votes in the Parliamentary election of 1952, 1957 and 1962, and its vote share hovered between 45, 48 percent of the total.¹² The absence of unified opposition and thanks to first- past- the- post electoral system, the Congress was able to maintain its dominance. But it will be wrong to hold that the Congress has ruled the whole country in the first two decades after independence. In the first state assembly elections of 1952, the Congress won clear majority in all states except Madras, Travancore-cochin, PEPSU, and Orissa and managed a bare majority in Rajasthan. Its opposition in Madras was saved by the separation of new state of Andhra where, however, the Communists Party of India (CPI), brought down the Congress government in November, 1954 and the Presidents rule had to be imposed.¹³ In 1954 state assembly election was held in Travancore-Cochin where coalition government were formed by PSP with the support of the Congress. The Coalition government was also formed in Orissa between congress and Gantantra Parishad in 1957 which lasted till 1967. In Kerala from 1960-1964, coalition government ruled, It was the coalition between PSP, Muslim league and the Congress.¹⁴ Despite the Congress dominance coalition politics at state level was prevalent from the very beginning.

Prior to fourth general elections (1967) the Congress Party was beset with numerous problems like the death of two towering leaders, Nehru and Shastri; two

successive wars which drained the resources of the country; two severe droughts that put the common man in hardship.¹⁵ The big jolt for the Congress was split of the party which became rampant at state level in 1966. Splits took place in Orissa, where the Orissa Jana Congress was formed, the Janta Party was formed in Rajasthan, the Janakranti Dal was formed in Bihar, in the Madhya Pradesh, Jana Congress was formed and in Punjab Janta Party was formed.¹⁶ All these new formations came from the Congress and they either contest election in alliance with opposition or contested on their own, but in both respects it gave the Congress a setback. The fourth general election assumes great importance in the Indian history because two trends emerged the erosion of the Congress dominance at state level and the formation of coalition governments by non-Congress parties. The single dominant party system was replaced by the multi-party system in which no particular party claimed absolute majority and the result was that the model of intra-party coalition was replaced by the inter-party coalition system.¹⁷ The Congress hegemony was reduced in the nine states – Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, where the non-Congress governments were formed.¹⁸ The anti-Congress sentiment unite different non-Congress political parties, having different ideological orientations at the state level. Thus in Bihar the Samyukta Vidhayak Dal was formed by SSP, PSP, Jana Sangh, Janakranti Dal and CPI. In Punjab the Popular United Front was formed which consists of Alkali Dal (Sant- group), Alkali Dal (Master group), CPI, SSP, Republican Party and CPI (M). In West Bengal, the United Front government was formed which consists of CPI (M), the Bangla Congress, and fourteen other parties. In Kerala United Front ministry consists of CPI (M), CPI, SSP, RSP, KTP, KSP and Muslim League. In Orissa, Swantra Party with help of the Jana Congress formed government.¹⁹ Though these experiments of coalition governments at state level did not last long but these experiments brought together the non-Congress political parties on a common platform which over the years never happened, and gave the Congress Party opportunity to take advantage of that fragmented opposition.

The Congress Split and First Coalition at the Centre (1967-1979)

The Congress debacle in the fourth general election developed internal contradiction in the Congress Party. The organisational group of the Congress dominated by syndicates became decisive in the Congress Party decision making. The Bangalore session of AICC held on July 1969, marked the Mrs. Gandhi's move towards the Congress split as mean to assert her.²⁰ In the session she eloquently spoke about radical economic policies that annoyed the conservative group in the Congress. But the immediate causes of contradiction between Mrs. Indira Gandhi and syndicates became the nomination of the President of India. The Syndicates preferred Sanjeev Reddy, as against Indira who preferred V.V. Giri but later preferred Jagjivan Ram, before the issues could have settled Indira ousted Morarji Desai of his finance portfolio because of his indifference towards her economic policies. The Second step was nationalisation of fourteen commercial banks.²¹ The result was the split in the Congress Party in 1969 between the ruling Congress headed by Indira and Congress (O) headed by Dr Ram Subhag Singh. After the Congress split in 1969, the party had to enter into an implicit coalition even at the Centre with the Communists and the Dravida Munnetra Kazagam (DMK) Party. No doubt it was the Congress government but it was a minority government and it had a legislative understanding with these supporting parties.²² The shift of Indira Gandhi towards left policies was politically motivated to discredit her conservative opponents and it was as an electoral strategy to win over the electorate. This shift ensured her to directly appeal the electorate by ignoring the factional bossism.²³

The fifth general election assumed great importance in the Indian electoral politics, because in this election the opposition political parties along with defected group of the Congress formed an electoral alliance to give the Congress (R) a united front in the election. The Jana Sangh, the Congress (O), the Swatantra Party, and the SSP formed National Democratic Front. This experiment of electoral alliance did not bear fruit for the opposition political parties because the Congress won the election in comprehensive way by attracting the electorates through radical slogan of *Garibi Hatao*. Thus Congress (R) under the leadership of Indira Gandhi formed the government at the centre. This was the beginning of new Congress dominance period which differs from the earlier Congress dominance period under Nehru and Shastri. Under Indira Gandhi the nature of the

Congress Party got changed. The new Congress Party under Indira Gandhi was characterised by absence of internal factional competition, which led to monopolistic dominance and erosion of openness in the Congress system. It was characterised by decline of institutionalised politics and growth of populist style. The consensus was broken down by preferring ideological coherence.²⁴ The Party building was ignored and was replaced by populist, charismatic, pyramid, power structure where political decisions were made at the apex not at the bottom. The impact of all these developments was growing intolerance towards dissenting forces in the party which resulted in the emergency syndrome.

Though Indira Gandhi had defused the challenges to her authority by causing split in the Congress Party but during the latter years of her rule she was beset with numerous political economic challenges which threatened her government. The financial drain caused due to the Bangladesh war, decline in the food production due to failure of monsoons brought two successive droughts and the Arab Israel war of Oct. 1973 brought international energy and fertilizer crises which resulted in the high inflation, widespread food shortage and unemployment.²⁵ The impact of all these conditions and problems was profound, as the people rose against these conditions particularly in Gujarat were the students' movement, soon joined by opposition political parties protested against the steep rise of food prices, cooking oil and other essential commodities. Morarji Desai also joined the chorus, by undertaking fast unto death. The same situation prevailed in Bihar where students demand the same.²⁶ The big jolt for the Congress was Allahabad High Court's Judgement which convicted Indira Gandhi for having indulged in corrupt campaign practices and declared her election invalid.²⁷ Jaya Prakash Narain who over the years had endeavoured to unite the anti-Congress forces took advantage of this surcharged environment by converting the discontent into political movement.²⁸ These forces were a challenge to Indira's government who responded by promulgating emergency.

The proclamation of emergency proved very costly for Indira's Congress. The immediate result was defeat of the Congress Party in the sixth Lok Sabha election. The opposition political parties under the leadership of Jaya Prakash Narain decided to give a united front to the Congress in the election. The opposition political parties like the Congress (O), the Jana Sangh, the Bharatiya Lok Dal and the Socialist Party merged into

one party named as the Janta Party.²⁹ The biggest blow for the Congress was sudden split in the party in which prominent leaders like Jagjivan Ram, H. N. Bahuguna, and Nandini Satpathy deserted the party and formed the Congress for Democracy. The Janta formation also came into electoral understanding with CPI (M) and regional forces like Alkali Dal, DMK to give the Congress a united front in the elections.³⁰ The opposition political parties under a common flag highlighted the emergency and its excess especially, forced sterilisation and restrictions on civil liberties in their election campaign.³¹ They asked the people to vote for democracy against the authoritarian rule of the Indira Gandhi. The election results gave the Congress a great blow as the Janta Party emerged as majority party with 330 seats and the Congress Party managed to won only 154 seats, and its allies, 7 seats won by CPI and 21 by AIADMK. The Congress lost heavily in the northern India where it managed to win only two seats out of 234 it contested but the Congress strengthened its position in the southern states of India by winning 92 seats as relatively higher than the 1971 Lok Sabha election.³²

The significant feature of sixth Lok Sabha election was the emergence of two party systems. The Congress dominance got eroded by the emergence of the Janta Party and the electoral competition started to become more polarised. The merger of the opposition political parties into the Janta Party and its alliance with regional forces like Alkali Dal, DMK and with the CPI (M) created highly the two party competitions.³³ This alliance both at the centre and at the state level proved very costly for the Congress Party. The Congress Party which over the years got benefit of the vote-seat distortion due to absence of united opposition, did not get benefit in 1977 election and even the vote-seat distortion went against the Congress Party and benefited the Janta Party.³⁴

The cause of defeating the Congress Party united the opposition political parties having different ideological orientations and social base, these political parties range from the left to right and from the secular to communal forces. After defeating the Congress Party, the Janta Party could not evolve consensus on policy issues and engaged into internal fighting. Before the coalition government was made the conflict arose on choosing the Prime Minister. The conflict was resolved under the leadership of Jaya Prakash Narain, who evolved consensus in favour of Morarji Desai. Later the factional fighting became acute when the Socialists raised the issue of dual membership of the Jana

Sangh members in the party who retained the RSS membership.³⁵ Before this issues could have settled strong corruption charges were raised against Kanti Desai, son of Morarji Desai.³⁶ This further intensified internal feud in the government. The biggest blow for the Janta government came when Raj Narain deserted the party and formed the Janta Secular.³⁷ The Congress Party in the opposition ponder upon the opportunity and brought non-confidence motion against the government and got passed it and it was on 15th July, 1979 that Morarji Desai submitted his resignation to the President.³⁸ This was followed by further defection of Janta Party important leaders like Charan Singh, Bahuguna, S. N. Misra and others also deserted from it.³⁹ Charan Singh tried to provide an alternative government with the help of Congress, but before he could have proved his majority Congress pulled out its support and the government fell down.

Though the Janta Party became successful in ousting the Congress out of power but it failed to remain a cohesive unit which resulted in the policy paralysis and inefficiency of the government. Arshi Khan rightly says, "The major cause of collapse of the Janta government was its very base of its existence. The formation of Janta Party was based on the strategy to weaken and defeat the Congress. But their leadership failed to decide on crucial point that is how to provide a cohesive and stable government to the people."⁴⁰

The Janta experiment, though short lived assumes great importance in the post independent political development in India. It laid the foundation of coalition politics in India and which became evident after 1989 general election and continued till this date. The trend which started in the 1967 at state level became visible at the centre in 1977. The notion of the Congress being a natural party to governance got great set back and an idea emerged that alternative government can emerge if the opposition political parties unite and maintain its cohesiveness and laid constructive policy for governance.

Revival of the Congress Domination (1980-1989)

The prospect of two party system collapsed soon as the Janta Party faced defection and paved way for the revival of Congress rule under Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi for ten years. In the Lok Sabha election of 1980 the Congress Party won 351 seats and emerged as the majority party in the Lok Sabha and the Lok Dal emerged as the

second largest party with 41 seats. The Left Front had a strength of 53 seats, it comprised of CPI (M)-(35), Forward Block-(3), RSP-(4), and Kerala Congress (Mani group)-(1).⁴¹ When Indira Gandhi came again to power in 1980, she revived her old way of relying on a small coterie ignoring organisation apparatus of the party. Indira Gandhi did not pay heed to restructure the party organisation and the same was followed by her son Rajiv Gandhi, which led to the erosion of party's social base. After the assassination of Indira Gandhi on 31 Oct.1984 the Congress leadership unanimously choose Rajiv Gandhi as her successor.⁴² In the Lok Sabha election of 1984, the Congress got benefited by the *sympathy wave*, generated by the assassination of Indira Gandhi. The Congress Party in its election campaign portrayed the nation in danger. The Congress got benefited of this and result was over whelming majority to the Congress Party which recorded 401 seats which was largest in relation to its previous victories.⁴³

Rajiv Gandhi in his Presidential address at Bombay, on centenary session of the Congress Party in 1985, laid emphasis on leading India towards twenty first century by accelerating India's industrial growth, liberalising the imports and providing incentives for exports; this appealed the youth and the middle class. His major thrust in speech was on restructuring the party, and he had dig on power brokers, and put emphasis on resurrecting the old glory of party by reaching out to people. But he couldn't restructure the party as it would have proved very costly for his leadership. On the issue of modernising the economy of the country he has to phase sever criticism from within the party. It was in this context when he laid down a resolution of economic policy in which word socialism was eliminated by his advisor to which the Congress Party was committed over the years, he has to phase sever criticism from his party men both at middle level workers and some senior leaders of the Congress Working Committee. Rajiv Gandhi gave up and restored the word socialism. Though he pursued further liberal economic policy but was not able to put it in more concerted form.⁴⁴ According to C. P. Bhambhri, "Rajiv Gandhi tried to accelerate the process of modernisation but he couldn't evolve an appropriate political response to meet the challenges of politics during 1984 to 1989."⁴⁵

Rajiv Gandhi tried to revive Congress's old social support base of the Muslims and the Hindus. For this he played two cards, the Muslim card by nullifying the *Shah*

Banoo Judgement and the Hindu card by permitting the *Shilanayas at Ayodha* which was the disputed site.⁴⁶ But both proved very costly for the Congress party, "... as it became the major cause for the Congress debacle in the 1989 Lok Sabha election." writes C. P. Bhambhri. The major blow to the Congress government came when the charges of wrong doings related to the *Bofor scandal* got surfaced. The government was severely disfigured and this led to the resignation of V.P. Singh. After resigning from the cabinet V. P Singh formed the Jana Morcha by organising the dissident Congress members against Rajiv Gandhi. After this he united the opposition political parties on the issue of *Bofor scandal*. By highlighting the corruption scandals of the Congress V.P Singh, took away the middle class support which Rajiv Gandhi had enjoyed earlier. The opposition unitedly, resigned from the Lok Sabha when Comptroller and Auditor General of India in its report indicted the government on irregularities related to the *Bofor*. The Congress severely lost its morale when its bill on giving Constitutional status to the Panchayat Raj was defeated in the Rajya Sabha after being passed in the Lok Sabha.⁴⁷ Before the election the environment was surcharged with emotions aroused by anti-corruption campaign, anti-Babri Masjid movement of the BJP and the Jana Sangh and the terrorist's threat to national unity.⁴⁸ The people faced lot of difficulties particularly, as the prices of essential commodities were rising which were not kept in check by the government. By taking the advantage of the weak condition of the Congress Party and the growing anti-incumbency sentiments, the opposition parties decided to give the Congress a united front. The National Front, the BJP and the Left Front formed an alliance in some four hundred constituencies to face the Congress, so that the opposition vote didn't split.⁴⁹ Therefore, the Congress was really in bad shape as the opposition parties were committed to defeat it.

From the Coalition Instability to Stability (1989-2004)

The general election of 1989, were held under surcharged environment of two popular waves, the 'Hindu wave' and the 'anti-Congress wave'. The Janta Dal got benefit of the later and the BJP got advantage of both. The 80 seat victory of BJP in the 1989 Lok Sabha election was product of 'Hindu wave' and the opposition unity.⁵⁰ It increased its percentage of votes from 7.73 percent to 11 percent as compared to the Congress Party

and the Janta Dal.⁵¹ In this election two trends became evident the emergence of BJP as an alternative to the Congress and the decline of the Congress Party.

Table 1.1: Seats won by various political parties in the 1989 lok sabha elections

Congress (I)	197
Janta Dal	143
Bharatatiya Janta Party	85
Janta Party	0
Lok Kranti Dal	0
Communist Party of India	12
Communist Party of India (Marxist)	33
ICSSR	1
Telugu Desam Party	2
Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam	0
Other major state parties	22
Others	22
Independents	12
Total	529

Source: N. Jose Chander. *Coalition Politics: the Indian experience*.

In the Lok Sabha election of 1989, the choice of electorate was somewhat different from the previous elections as they have elected a Parliament in which no single party had a majority.⁵² It was an ambiguous verdict in which the Congress was the single largest party but not in a position to form the government of its own. The Congress declined to form the government and the onus to form the government fell on the shoulders of National Front which was the second largest party after the Congress. The other political parties which decided to support the National Front from outside were the BJP and the Left Front which were naturally antagonistic to each other and that prevents them to be the part of the government. This very outside support by the BJP and the Left Front to minority coalition government was calculated, as it ensured them to keep the Congress Party away from power and secondly, it ensured them to use the minority government without the responsibility.⁵³ The National Front government had to maintain this triangular balance which was very difficult and which ultimately became its cause of the down fall.

Furthermore, the internal contradiction in the main party of the National Front that is Janta Dal⁵⁴ remained intact. Though, formally merger took place in the party but personal enmity among the leaders like V.P Singh, Chandra Shekhar, Devi Lal, Ajit Singh and Bahuguna remained intact.⁵⁵ This halted the progress of the National Front coalition government much. The biggest deficiency for the National Front minority government was that it didn't evolve a Common Minimum Programme and didn't lay down formal mechanisms to sort out internal contradictions in the coalition government. The novel experiment soon found itself in trouble when Devi Lal decided to organise a big movement against V. P Singh and the latter in order to counter the former took the haste decision to implement the recommendations of the Mandal Commission.⁵⁶ The sudden decision of implementing the Mandal Commission's recommendation (to give 27 percent reservation to OBCs) put other national political parties into back foot. The nation which over the years had remained a cohesive entity got divide on the issue of social justice. The BJP which over the years had garnered the support of the upper castes found itself in dilemma. It played the *Mandir Card* against the *Mandal Card*, so to mobilise the majority.⁵⁷ The BJP withdrew its support to the National Front Government on October 23, 1990 when the Bihar government on the advice of the Prime Minister V.P Singh, arrested the BJP leader L.K. Advani during his spectacular *Rath Yathra*, from Somnath in Gujarat to Ayodha in U.P, to mobilise Hindus for building Ram temple in place of the Babri Masjid.⁵⁸ As the BJP withdrew its support to the National Front minority government, a non-confidence motion was passed against V.P Singh led National Front minority government on November 7, 1990. The fall of National Front led to split of the Janta Dal when Chandrasekhar who along with his 55 members formed the Janta Dal (Samajwadi), and staked the claim for forming the government with the outside support of the Congress. Some regional parties also like, AIADMK, BSP, Muslim League, National Conference, and few independents also gave their support to new minority government led by Chandra Shekhar. It was on November 10, 1990 that Chandra Shekhar was sworn as the Prime Minister and Devi Lal as his deputy Prime Minister who left him in cold at the time of selection of V.P Singh as the first Prime Minister of the National Front.⁵⁹ This novel experiment of minority coalition government did not last too long, as the Congress was not satisfied with the government policies related to Punjab,

Jammu and Kashmir and Assam; the economy of the country; the rising prices of essential commodities, and with the decision of permitting US plane to refuel in India.⁶⁰ However, the immediate cause for withdrawing support from the minority coalition government was the issue of surveillance of Rajiv Gandhi by two constables from Haryana. The Congress took this issue seriously and ultimately withdrew its support to minority coalition government, and Chandra Shekhar submitted his resignation to the President on the March 6, 1991.⁶¹

The issue of the *Mandal* and *Mandir* brought chaos in India. The secular fabric which over the years was hall mark of India Republic got tarnished when the political parties for their electoral benefit played the *communal* and *caste cards*. The greater beneficiaries of this were BJP and Janta Dal somehow got benefit of it. But the both issues of *Mandal* and *Mandir* greatly cost the Congress party. On the *Mandal* issue Congress became unable to decide which way to go. The Congress was in dilemma because taking stand against the Mandal recommendations would have cause it to lose the remaining support of the backward castes nor it could have openly favoured the recommendations, than it would have lost the support of the forward castes, which constituted its key supporters and even constituted significant positions of its office holders.⁶²

The failure of National Front to sustain as a cohesive force for governance and to be an alternative to the Congress Party at the national level gave the Congress Party, a chance to convey to the electorate that it is only the Congress Party which can provide stable government. Rajiv Gandhi tried to reach out to the people through *Sadbhavana Yatras*.⁶³ In the general election of 1991, the *Mandir-Masjid* issue became the focal point and the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in between the election gave new turn to election.

The Lok Sabha election of 1991 again brought a hung parliament. In this election the Congress emerged as the largest party, with not too much strength to form the government on its own. Narasimha Rao was chosen as the party leader and elected as the President of the Congress Party in the organisational polls which were held after a gap of twenty years. He was the first leader outside the Nehru-Gandhi, dynasty who centralise the power by becoming both the Prime Minister and the President of the party.⁶⁴ The organisational elections were held in the context that Narasimha Rao greatly faced the

challenge within the party particularly from the faction which was loyal to Nehru-Gandhi dynasty. In order to diffuse this challenge he went for polls.⁶⁵ The Narasimha Rao government started as a single party minority government but during later half it strengthened itself when Ajit Singh's group merged with the Congress with JMM support. During Rao's tenure the economy of the country was in shamble. Therefore, Rao's government took the bold initiative to open the India economy for liberalisation.⁶⁶ Narasimha Rao also tried to revive the Congress's secular image by introducing two bills on July 29, 1994 so that to delink the politics from religion. The bills empower the Election Commission to debar the political parties from contesting elections with religion name. But he had to face severe criticism from the media and the opposition, though it somehow revive Congress's stand on secularism but still the Muslim community under the *Ayodha syndrome* remained very much alienated from the Congress and the Congress did not secure her position in the eleventh Lok Sabha election.⁶⁷

The 1996 Lok Sabha election again produced a fractured mandate and hung-Parliament. No political party was in a position to form government of its own. Moreover, the Congress once the dominant party in Indian political system was reduced to second position for the first time with 141 seats. The BJP with its pre-election allies came first with 187 seats but also failed to get the requisite numbers for government formation. The significant development of 1996 election was the formation of not only the anti-Congress alliance but also the anti-BJP alliance.⁶⁸ The United Front was an alliance of secular forces with having regional bases. The election had brought the regional forces into the centre stage of Indian politics.⁶⁹ The rise of regional forces had been mainly because of the substantial failure of the high command system in Congress, BJP or Janta Dal. Many of the regional forces were off shoot of the Congress.⁷⁰ As a largest party in the Parliament, the onus to form the government fell on the shoulders of BJP which under the leadership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee took the charge of forming the government in May 16, 1996. The BJP leaders tried hard to look far and wide to muster some additional support to strengthen their position in the Parliament. However, they couldn't succeed and finally, the Prime Minister A.B Vajpayee on May 27, 1996 submitted his resignation.⁷¹ Therefore, the 13 day government led by the Vajpayee fell down. Thereafter, the President called upon H. D. Deve Gowda, to form the

government as the leader of the United Front— a combination of the National Front and the Left Front, a coalition of 13 parties and the outside support of the Congress.

Table 1.2: Seats won by various political parties in 1996 in Lok Sabha Elections

BJP and allies	Seats	Congress(I) & allies	Seats	NF-LF and others	Seats
BJP	160	Congress (I)	139	Janta Dal	45
Shivsena	15			CPI(M)	32
Samata	8			CPI	12
Haryana Vikas Party	3			FB	3
				RSP	5
				SP	17
				BSP	11
				DMK	17
				TMC	20
				TDP	16
				AKALIDAL	8
				AJP	5
				AICC(T)	5
				Others	19
Total	186	TOTAL	139	TOTAL	215

Source: N. Jose Chander. Coalition Politics: the Indian experience

The very outside support of the Congress Party to the United Front government was politically calculated to halt the progress of the BJP which was becoming a major political force since 1989.⁷² Taking lesson from the failure of the National Front coalition government the United Front government for the first time evolved Common Minimum Programme. In order to ensure the smooth working of coalition government and implementation of Common Minimum Programme, a Steering Committee was also devised.

A significant development related with the emergence of the United Front coalition government was the revival of the federal spirit of Indian political system. Within the United Front the regional actors like DMK, TMC, TDP and AGP formed the *Federal Front*. While deliberating on the basic principles of governance of United Front government Prime Minister H.D Deve Gowda said,

...we regard this United Front as the people's power to be used for realising your hopes and aspirations. It is also the beginning of new way of governance – governance based on federalism, decentralisation, equality and justice. Secular outlook and democratic spirit are the foundations of this coalition.⁷³

The United Front coalition government headed by the H.D. Deve Gowda, from the very beginning had to maintain a balance between the Left Front who were against the economic liberalisation, the regional forces so as to maintain the federal balance and lastly, to contain the Congress which was favouring economic liberalisation and looking for more leverages.⁷⁴ It was lack of coordination between the Congress and the United Front government that resulted in creating mutual distrust between these two and more importantly, the assertive role of the United Front government, largely antagonise the Congress.⁷⁵ The conflict became acute between the two when the United Front government decided to reopen the investigation in the Tanwar murder case in which Sitaram Kesari was allegedly involved.⁷⁶ The Congress Party was put to surprise when the CBI team questioned the Party President on his allegedly disproportionate assets and consequently, the Congress Party withdrew its support to the government.⁷⁷ It was on April 11, 1997 that the fate of the United Front government was sealed as the government could not win the vote of confidence.

In order to avert the dissolution of the house The Congress Party came into an understanding with the United Front and accepted the change in the leadership. The Congress again agreed to support the United Front coalition government under I. K. Gujral. He (I.K Gujral) was elected as the leader of the United Front on April 16, 1997 and sworn as the Prime Minister on April 21, 1997. But the experiment also did not last too long and the fate of Gujral led coalition government was sealed by the Congress Party when the Jain Commission probing the Rajiv Gandhi assassination exposed the involvement of DMK into the act. The Congress Party demanded the removal of DMK

from the coalition but the United Front did not pay heed to this demand and ultimately the Congress withdrew its support on 28 November, 1997 and the government fell down. The fall of the United Front coalition government was more due to the Congress Party than to its internal contradictions.⁷⁸ The Congress Party acted as spoiler and hence contributed to its growing unpopularity. The Third Front or United Front failed to remain a cohesive force and an attempt to provide a unified political alternative to the BJP and the Congress also failed. However, the Third Front brought the regional forces on to the centre stage of Indian politics and made them important partners in the coalition governance. This is the only major contribution emerging out of the formation of the Fronts.⁷⁹

The election held in 1998 also produced a truncated Lok Sabha, and a 18 party coalition led by BJP's Atal Bihari Vajpayee came into power on 19th March, 1998.⁸⁰ The failure of BJP to muster support for their government in 1996 made them realise that in order to form alliances and form government it had to moderate its stand on issues like the Uniform Civil Code, Article 370 and the Ram Janmbhoomi and it did the same in 1998 election which resulted in attracting more partners for their government. The fractured verdict and the subsequent emergence of coalition politics reflect the divergence in India along caste, religion, disparity of economics and so many divergences. The BJP was quick to ponder upon this and build alliances to control the political power.⁸¹ The mid-term election of 1998 took place in the backdrop of governmental instability and fragmented party system. The BJP with its old allies and new partners emerged as the largest vote puller in the country, securing 31 percent of votes and captured 180 seats; more than 25 percent on the slogan of stable government and able leadership.⁸² On the one side BJP was building alliances, the Congress Party was facing internal problem of splits. The Manipur State Congress (Manipur), the Loktantrik Congress (UP), the Trinamul Congress (West Bengal), the Himachal Vikas Congress (Sukhram) and later the Nationalist Congress Party of Sharad Pawar split from the Congress Party. Furthermore, the Third Front which was a combination of thirteen parties lost its cohesion.

Table 1.3 Seats won by various political parties in 1998 Lok Sabha Elections

BJP and its Allies	251
United Front	96
Congress and its Allies	166
Others	22
Total	535
BJP and its Allies	
BJP	178
AIADMK	18
Samata Party	12
BJD	9
SAD	8
Trinamul	7
Shivsena	6
Lok Shakti	3
PMK	4
MDMK	3
TRC	1
JP	1
HVP	1
TOTAL	251

Source: N. Jose Chander. *Coalition Politics: The Indian Experience*.

The message of 1998 Lok Sabha election was clearly, peoples verdict for two party system to dominate the country's political scenario.⁸³ Again the BJP formed the coalition government, and it ruled India for thirteen months. But from the beginning the AIADMK supremo Jayalalitha remained a headache for A. B. Vajpayee led government. The AIADMK group (including the PMK, the MDMK and the Tamizhaga Rajiv Gandhi led by Rama Murthy and the Janta Party) commanded support of 27 MPs at that time kept BJP on tenterhooks, because in the beginning Jayalalitha delayed her letter of support to the President.⁸⁴ She largely decided the fate of Vajpayee led coalition government. The Jayalalitha decision to join the coalition government was largely motivated to secure her demands of ousting the DMK from power in Tamil Nadu and getting the key portfolios. The situation became sever when the Jayalalitha demanded the reinstatement of the Chief of Naval staff Admiral Bhagwat, and the constitution of a joint political committee to probe into his sacking as also the expulsion of Fernandez.⁸⁵ The BJP led coalition government rejected her demands and the result was Jayalalitha decided to withdraw her

support from the government. The President, K.R Narayanan, meanwhile asked the BJP led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government to seek a vote of confidence from the Lok Sabha. After hectic drama in the capital of India, the motion of confidence in his government was moved by A. B. Vajpayee but, it was rejected by the Lok Sabha by the narrowest margin of one vote, the final tally was 269 in favour and 270 against the motion.

Despite the fact that, BJP led coalition government of 1998 took lesson from the previous coalition governments and laid down a co-ordination committee but it never take it seriously as it was without secretariat or spokesperson. The meetings of the co-ordination committee were rarely held.⁸⁶ No sincere efforts were made by the BJP and its allies to make the coordination committee an effective body. That is why different conflicts among the allies got crop up at different movements which led to its downfall. Before the Lok Sabha elections of 1999, the BJP was largely in advantage as because the manner of its defeat in the Lok Sabha by ditching was presented as institutional hurt, secondly, as a caretaker government it confronts itself with Kargil War and its victory gave it chance to present itself as the saver of the nation. And thirdly, the United Front disintegration and the Janta Dal split added strength to it as there was no other strong force to challenge it.⁸⁷ Therefore, in 13th Lok Sabha election of September-October 1999 the BJP led NDA emerged as the largest alliance which can stake the claim for the formation of government. As the election results were declared the NDA secured 299 seats. The choice of people to bring back the NDA in power was the positive endorsement of the coalition system.⁸⁸ The BJP led NDA government consists of 24 political parties as some political parties like National Conference, Mizo National Front, Sikkim Democratic Front and other smaller parties were post election allies. The NDA coalition government completed its full term and ends the decade long instability of the coalition government. The notion of coalition phase being an aberration was discarded and the message was clear that coalition politics will stay. But more importantly, the BJP tried to sustain the coalition government. Taking lessons from the past coalition governments the NDA coalition government put forward the National Agenda for Governance (NAG) in order to ensure the smooth working of the coalition government.

Table 1.4: Table Seats won by various political parties in 1999 in Lok Sabha Elections

BJP and allies	Seats	Congress(I) & allies	Seats	Left parties	Seats	Other parties	Seats
BJP	182	Congress (I)	114	CPI	4	BSP	14
BJD	10	AIADMK	10	CPI(M)	33	SP	26
DMK	12	KC(M)	1	FB	2	NC	4
HVC	1	ML	2	KC(J)	1	Indep. and others	21
INLD	5	RJD	7	RSP	3		
JD(U)	21	RLD	2				
LOKTANTRIK	2						
MDMK	4						
MGRADMK	1						
MSCP	1						
PMK	5						
SAD	2						
SS	15						
TRINAMUL	8						
TDP	29						
IND.(Maneka)	1						
Total	299	TOTAL	136	TOTAL	43	Total	65

Source: N. Jose Chander. *Coalition Politics: The Indian experience*

The NAG was based on the principle of synchronise the policy stands of the allies through consensus. At second level, there was a coordination committee which was established to see the policy implementation and resolve conflicts. Besides these, inter-ministerial groups called as Group of Ministers (GOM), worked as coordination mechanism to minimise the differences of opinion and conflict within the cabinet.⁸⁹ Therefore, in order to ensure the stability of the coalition government the institutionalised mechanisms for conflict management cannot be for granted. The other factors which were responsible for the stability of the NDA coalition government according to Alistair Macmillan were,

The structure of party competition at the state coalition remained stable, and the national coalition between the BJP and regional parties was sustained by its foundation in state-wise electoral alliance. Secondly, the BJP, right up to the 2004 general election, was widely perceived

to be electorally successful – an asset as a partner in national and state-wise alliances – and this served to maintain existing coalition tie against a common enemy (the INC).⁹⁰

Conclusion

India is multi-diverse country and the coalition politics reflects this diversity. After independence the all embracing character of the Congress Party had represented all shades of Indian society. But with the passage of time due the change in the socio-economic profile of the country new social groups emerged and looked for space in the political process. The Congress Party could not accommodate and reconcile with the new groups hence new political formations came into existence around these social groups and made the political process more competitive. These new political formations were limited within a particular region or territorial area. The BJP after 1990 through its Hindutva ideology emerged as the alternative to Congress Party at the national level but not strong enough to stake claim for government because of limited social bas. Therefore, BJP moderated its stand on contentious issue which helped it to reach out to other social groups of the society through alliance formation. And ultimately it lead a stable coalition government from 1999-2004. On the other hand the Congress Party did not opt for alliance and worked as spoiler in some coalition governments by it outside support. The Congress Party too realised the fragmentation of Indian party system and forge an alliance in 2004 under the banner of United Progressive Alliance. Now both the BJP and the Congress contest national elections and even state election in alliance with state parties or regional forces and formed coalition governments which reflects a collective approach to governance.

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Chapter - III

Lok Sabha Election 2004 and the Formation of United Progressive Alliance Government (UPA-I)

the notion that coalition politics is a transitional phase in Indian politics. The same trend which started in 1989 at central level also got reflected in the 2004 election verdict. At individual level no national political party was in a position to stake claim for the formation of government. It was a clear verdict for the coalition government, thus discarding the long held notion that coalition governance is an aberration and unstable by the very nature. The BJP led NDA was the manifestation of BJP's understanding about the changing pattern of Indian party system which had become polarised due to change in the socio-economic profile in the country and resulted in the emergence of new social groups. The rise of these new social groups in the political process was also supplemented by the decline of the Congress Party which had represented all the section of Indian society. The Congress Party lost its hegemony due the departure of nationalist generation, the demise of internal democracy and emergence of the personalised mass appeal of the top leadership.¹ The Congress Party could not accommodate with the new social groups and hence paved the way for the new social groups to lay down foundation of new political parties to articulate their demand. This led to more competitive electoral process.

The 2004 Lok Sabha election was not different from the earlier elections. However, what differentiated this election was the loose bipolar contest was witnessed in which the two big national parties forge alliances with the different regional forces. The Congress Party over the years had remained indifferent towards coalition governance, because it considered itself as natural party to govern. The Congress Party's reluctant attitude towards forging alliance and becoming a part of the coalition government became evident in Pachmarhi session, in October, 1998 in which Sonia Gandhi, eloquently said:

.... Friends, there has been much talk about the Congress's attitude towards coalition government. The fact that we are going through coalition phase at national level politics, reflects in many ways the decline of the Congress, this is a phase and we will come back again with full force and on our own steam. But in the interim coalition may well be needed In the last few months, I get the feeling that the country, fed up with over two years of non governance, is waiting to give us another chance. I get the feeling that more and more people who moved away from us are once again coming around the point of

view that only the Congress has experience, the expertise, the energy and the enthusiasm to provide an effective government that will revive the stagnant economy, arrest the price rise, get the new investment flow once again and improve our standing in the world. We should, however, not be complacent. But we must recognise that the tide seems to be turning.²

This reluctant attitude of the Congress Party towards coalition government kept it out of power for eight years. On the contrary its political opponent, that is, BJP realised its limited social base and polarised political competition, forged alliance with regional forces by moderating its ideology, so to accommodate and sustain coalition government.

The Congress Party under the leadership of Sonia Gandhi understood the constraints of the party and it was in Shimla and Srinagar meeting in 2003, where the message came out clear for preference to forge coalition with secular minded parties.³In the December, 2003 state assembly elections the Congress Party lost heavily in Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh while retaining Delhi. This further confirmed to the Congress Party that if it had to form government at the centre, it will have to forge alliances with other political parties particularly, the regional forces. The same fact was ascertained by the Pranab Mukerjee committee which was appointed by the Congress high command to ascertain the causes of the Congress debacle in these states.⁴Thereafter, the Congress Party under the leadership of Sonia Gandhi struck pre-poll alliance in Tamil Nadu with DMK, which broke away from the BJP led NDA because of latter's preference for AIADMK which had shown good electoral show in the assembly election. This helped the Congress Party to approach the DMK. Sonia Gandhi also made pre-poll alliance in Maharashtra with NCP, and also with some minor parties like RPI and JD(S).The Congress Party also formed electoral alliance with TRS of Andhra Pradesh, JMM of Jharkhand and most significantly it came into electoral understanding in Bihar with RJD, LJP and with PDP in Jammu and Kashmir. In the states like Tamil Nadu and Bihar the Congress Party had been reduced over the years to the status of third or fourth party and hence not a threat to the other parties in these states. In some states like Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand and Jammu and Kashmir the Congress Party attracted the other parties for alliance because it faced a direct contest with BJP led NDA and presence of third and

fourth minor party help it to build alliance with them.⁵ Thus the weak position of the Congress Party in these states and the presence and formation of new political parties helped the Congress to build alliance, which over the years was not possible because the Congress was main political opponent to these parties in these states. This pre-poll alliance largely proved to be game changer and immensely helped the Congress Party in the 14th Lok Sabha election.

Lok Sabha Election 2004 verdict

The election results defied all the opinion polls which had predicted the NDA comeback. The euphoria developed due to NDA victory in December 2003 assembly elections led the BJP to go for the Lok Sabha election earlier than its due date. The BJP led NDA highlighted the achievements of the government through its *India shining* and *feel good* slogans which proved disastrous for it, as it made the economy central issue of the election. On the other hand the Congress Party put forth the slogan of *Aam Admi Ko Kya Mila* and thereby highlighted impact of NDA policy on the poor.⁶ As the election results were announced the Congress Party emerged as the single largest part with 145 seats relatively higher than its 1999 tally when it had 114 seats. However, its (Congress) vote share showed a negative trend of 1.77 percent (in 1999 the Congress Party had a vote share of 28.3 and in 2004 it was 26.4 percent) it may be because of the fact that the party surrendered some seats to its allies (in 1999 Congress Party contested 453 and in 2004 it contested only 414).⁷ The pre-poll allies of the Congress Party scored 74 seats and 9.1 percent of votes. The total number of seats and percentage of votes of the Congress Party and its allies was 219, and 35.82 percent. It was more than BJP led NDA which won 189 seats with a vote share of 35.9 percent. BJP's vote share in 1999 was 23.3 but it showed this time a negative trend of 1.3 percent.⁸ The difference in the vote share between the Congress led alliance and BJP led alliance (NDA) was not so much but in the first-past-the-post electoral system, a little difference in vote share result in a lot of difference in seats. The pre-poll alliances were critical for the Congress victory in states like Tamil Nadu, where the Congress with DMK scored 35 seats, in Andhra Pradesh where Congress with TRS won 34 seats, in Maharashtra where Congress along NCP won 23 seats, in Bihar where Congress with RJD and LJP won 27 seats and in the state of Jammu and Kashmir where Congress in combination with PDP won 4 seats.⁹ The presence of

strong regional forces and lack of alliance in states like U.P. and West Bengal proved cost for the Congress and its allies, as in U.P it managed to win only 9 seats and in West Bengal it got only 3 seats. The Left Front emerged as a third strong force in the 2004 election and it got 61 seats with a vote share of 8.34 percent. The other political parties particularly SP got 36 seats with vote share of 4.3 percent, and BSP got 19 seats with the vote share of 5.33.¹⁰

Table.1.4: Seats won by various political parties in the 2004 Lok Sabha elections

Parties	Seats	Votes (%)	Parties	Seats	Votes (%)	Parties	Seats	Votes (%)
Congress +allies	219	35.82	NDA	189	35.91	Left Front	61	8.34
Congress	145	26.69	BJP	138	22.16	CPI(M)	43	5.69
RJD	21	2.22	Shiv Sena	12	1.82	CPI	10	1.4
DMK	16	1.82	BJD	11	1.31	RSP	3	0.44
NCP	9	1.78	JD(U)	8	2.29	FBL	3	0.35
PMK	6	0.56	Akali Dal(B)	8	0.91	KEC	1	0.09
JMM	5	0.48	TDP	5	3.06	IND(LF)	1	0.08
THS	5	0.63	WBTC	2	2.08	Other Parties	70	19.93
LJNP	4	0.72	MNF	1	0.05	SP	36	4.33
MDMK	4	0.43	SDF	1	0.04	BSP	19	5.33
PDP	1	0.08	IEDP	1	0.07	RLD	3	0.64
MUL	1	0.2	NDF	1	0.18	JD(S)	3	1.48
RPI(A)	1	0.09	IND(BJP)	1	0.18	AGP	2	0.53
IND(INC)	1	0.02				SJP(R)	1	0.09
						NC	2	0.13
						Other Independents	1	3.79
						NIP	1	0.09
						MIM	1	0.11
						Others	1	5.56

Source: The Hindu- 20th May, 2004.

However, what was more important about the election verdict of 2004 was that it reaffirmed the importance of the regional and state based parties in the national politics. The decline of the BJP and the Congress as pan-Indian political parties gave regional and state based parties greater weightage in the government formations at central level because both the NDA and UPA-I couldn't have been formed without

the support of these political parties. Therefore, the regionalisation of Indian politics which began in 1996 got also manifested in 2004 election.

The 2004 Lok Sabha election verdict was interpreted by political pundits in many ways. Three theories emerged to explain the BJP-NDA defeat. Some took it as vote for secular India, others saw it as a result of anti-incumbency factor which had become a password for defining any incomprehensible phenomenon in the outcome of Indian election and lastly, some groups related it to economic causes and held that it was vote against government's pro-reform policy.¹¹ While as for as the first view which specifies that it was a verdict for the secular India and believed that the violence in Gujarat had impacted the NDA fortune. Scholars like Wilkinson, held this view, even some of the BJP leaders like Vajpayee also evinced similar feelings relating the political debacle to the violence in Gujarat: "... it is difficult to specify what reason led to defeat in the election but one impact of the violence was that we lost the election".¹² But this view does not sound too strong, as the findings of Abhay Dattar, who in CSDS exit poll results ascertained that there was wide spread communal leaning of the respondents as 65 percent of the respondents demanded a ban on religious conversion, 66 percent wanted separate laws to govern marriage and property right, and likewise 62 percent of respondents wanted ban on inter-community marriage.¹³ Therefore, the very notion that violence in Gujarat had alienated a large number of liberal Hindus is not altogether right. Yogendar Yadav said that the large section of Hindus disapproved the Gujarat massacre and supported tolerance but there is little evidence to justify the view that these strains may have led to a vote against the BJP.¹⁴ However, it will be wrong to assume that the Gujarat violence had absolutely no impact. It surely had an impact on the minority vote, especially the Muslim vote of NDA which had shown a positive trend over the years, depicted a negative trend in 2004 Lok Sabha election which proved costly for the NDA. The other perspective which related the verdict to economic reasons asserted that it was a vote against pro-reform policy of the government. Scholars like Zoya Hassan, share the same view as she observes, "...The election results can plausibly be seen as rejection of reforms."¹⁵ She largely relies on the study of Centre for the Study of Developed Societies (CSDS) which showed that, "...there is very little approval among ordinary citizens for economic reforms and there is very high degree

of popular consensus on this matter that cuts across class and party lines”¹⁶ However, same study concludes with an opinion that it would be wrong to assume that NDA government lost election due to economic policies. In support of the argument Yogendar Yadav remarks “that very few ordinary people have the idea about the policy of economic reforms so, they cannot be expected to have clear opinions about something they hardly comprehend.”¹⁷ However, he also does not entirely discard the impact of economic reforms on the voting behaviour, accordingly, he remarks, “...The consequences of policies of economic reforms and the anxiety about economic conditions, especially employment, played a small but significant role in neutralising people’s otherwise positive assessment of the NDA regime and may have thus contributed to the defeat of the NDA”.¹⁸

The other perspective sees this verdict through the prism of anti-incumbency, although this perspective also fails to convince. Observing the anti-incumbency factor one finds that on the one hand anti-incumbency hit NDA in Andhra Pradesh, Haryana and Jharkhand, on the other hand, it got benefitted from positive effect of incumbency in Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, and Madhya Pradesh.¹⁹ So, it means that state level incumbency actually worked for the NDA .Therefore, it will be wrong to see this verdict wholly from this perspective.

Summing up the above perspectives the researcher finds some obvious limitations. Firstly, the secular perspective which assume that Gujarat incident led to the fall of NDA government is weakened by the CSDS study which does not support this argument however, this incidence had impacted the minority vote particularly Muslims vote as it showed negative trend of 4 percent for NDA (in 1999 it was 15% and in 2004 election it was 11%) and more importantly the BJP allies suffered seriously because Muslims resort to tactical voting in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal which cost heavily for the BJP and its allies.²⁰ Secondly, when we take the economic perspective, in case of Andhra Pradesh it sounds convincing as 54 per cent of the voters interviewed by the CSDS team considered that employment opportunities have gone down during NDA era and two third respondents believe that NDA policy benefited only the rich. In states like Bihar, 57 percents of the respondents share the same view, in Jharkhand 35 percent people responded that employment opportunities have deteriorated in during the NDA regime and among

them 62 percent voted for the Congress. However, in states like Punjab and Orissa popular response towards NDA economic policies was positive, in Punjab majority of the people held positive opinion about the economic policies of the NDA.²¹ As far as the anti-incumbency view is considered, it doesn't convince to explain the fact that if anti-incumbency had hit NDA in certain parts it also got benefited from positive wave of incumbency in certain states. This leads us to the opinion that all the three major interpretative perspectives mentioned above give only a partial explanation and much more needs to be explained. After further inquisitive evaluation we find that what had made a considerable difference between the Congress and the BJP was that the Congress had struck right kind of alliance in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Bihar and Maharashtra. These states contributed more than half of the seats to the Congress led alliance latter named as UPA-I. The Congress did not face a strong collective opposition because BJP failed to forge an alliance in States like Assam, Haryana and Jharkhand; it all resulted in that Congress got a chance to build alliance in these states.²² The alliance formation helped the Congress led alliance (later named as UPA) to gain from the people's dissent whether it was due to economic issues, minority violence or some other cause. For the Congress right kind of alliance did the trick as it contributed 74 seats and 9.1 percent of votes to the combined tally on the contrary BJP's allies contributed 51 seats and a vote share of 13.8 percent to the final which was relatively lower than in the previous election. All the above quoted factors collectively had resulted in the debacle of the NDA in the 2004 elections and the fact that Congresses' rational electoral calculation helped it to convert the people's dissent into seats by accommodating the regional forces, otherwise, the absence of alliance would have splited the vote.

Formation of United Progressive Alliance Government (UPA-I government)

Soon after the election results were declared it became evident that the Congress Party will lead the new coalition government and it will be headed by the none other than the Congress Party President Sonia Gandhi. The emergence of the Congress Party as the single largest party in 2004 Lok Saba election had made it clear that voters of India had rejected the xenophobic attack of BJP on Sonia Gandhi and

gave her the mandate to lead the Congress led coalition government at the centre. Sonia Gandhi made it clear that coalition government will be open for all the secular political parties who aspire for inclusive India. It was on 16th May, 2004 that a meeting was held at the residence of Sonia Gandhi where all the pre-poll allies and even some other parties like SP, RLD and Left Parties were present and these parties collectively backed Sonia Gandhi's claim for the post of Prime Minister.²³ The election verdict even softened Sharad Pawar of NCP who had reserved his decision on Sonia Gandhi's claim for the post before the election. The BJP did not take lesson from its defeat and persisted with its xenophobic attack on Sonia Gandhi, when it became inevitable that she will be the next Prime Minister. The senior BJP leaders started a campaign that a person of foreign origin cannot hold the country's important office and it was in this context leader like Sushma Swaraj threatened to shave her head if Sonia Gandhi became the Prime Minister. However, Sonia Gandhi's penultimate decision to hold back from the post of Prime Minister took the wind out of the campaign of BJP and the same was corroborated by the a RSS activist, who said that the campaign of the foreign origin could have greatly assisted the BJP and Sangh Parivar in putting the Congress and its allies in defence for several months.²⁴ Sonia Gandhi nominated Dr. Manmohan Singh as the Prime Minister of the fourteen party United Progressive Alliance²⁵ coalition government with outside support of the Left Front. Some constituents in the Left Front like Forward Block, CPI and some leaders of CPI (M) were eager to join the government but leaders of CPI (M) from the West Bengal and Kerala opposed the participation in the government for fear of losing their base in these states where the Congress Party was their main political rival. Secondly, the leaders in the Kerala and West Bengal were concerned about the rise of communal forces in these states. In Kerala Congress was faction ridden and could have paved way for the BJP ascendancy, and in West Bengal the CPI (M) was concerned about the rise of Mamta Banarjee's Trinamool Congress (TMC) and BJP that could have replaced the Congress in the opposition in 2006 assembly elections.²⁶ Therefore, the Left Fronts support was calculated in the sense that by supporting the UPA-I government from outside it wanted to contain the communal forces and by keeping itself outside the government it wanted to put pressure on the government during policy making which would have helped the party to strengthen the social base in states like West Bengal, Kerala, Tripura where the Congress Party was its main opposition.

The active participation of the Left Front in the UPA-I government could have proved costly for the Left Front in the upcoming elections of West Bengal and Kerala in 2006. The BJP accused the left Front on the ground that it wanted to wield power without responsibility as they did the same during the United Front coalition government.

The Left Front's decision to remain outside the Congress led UPA-I government was deliberate because it (Left Front) had ideological difference with the Congress on economic issues and its state concerns. However, for the Samajwadi party the fate was decided by the Congress denial, for as it was a secular party it was willing to support the UPA-I government. Although the Congress Party was leading a coalition government, it had an underneath agenda for reviving its social support base in Uttar Pradesh where Samajwadi Party (SP) and Rashtrya Lok Dal (RLD) were its main rivals and obstacle to its revival. Therefore, the Congress party declined the offer of S.P and RLD to be the part of the UPA-I government. Both parties decided to give UPA-I government outside support because the Congress was similarly supporting the S.P government from outside in Uttar Pradesh. The Congress Party was trying to revive its secular image and this could have happened only by marginalizing the SP.²⁷

After UPA-I government was formed, Sonia Gandhi was made the chairperson of the National Advisory Council that monitors the implementation of National Common Minimum Programme (NCMP) and provides inputs to the government in policy formation. She was also unanimously elected as to head the UPA and UPA-Left Coordination Committee. This new institution vitalized the role of Sonia Gandhi in the UPA-I government and gave a new orientation to the policies of UPA-I government. The new institution (NAC) consisted of the eminent representatives of civil society, apart from the bureaucrats, politicians etc. C.P Bhambhri said:

Sonia Gandhi through NAC extended and deepened the definition of the rights of man by enacting laws particularly for rural employment, for the rights of tribal on their forests resources and also by Right to Information Act which acts as guarantor of implementation of new programmes for the rural poor and the tribal's.²⁸

However, BJP criticised the government pointing out that the new institution created the dual power centres and undermined the role of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh discarded the allegation that he is weak Prime Minister and said, "Sonia Gandhi, is a source of strength for me, I will be probably less effective in many of the tasks she has to perform as UPA chairperson and Congress President".²⁹ The dual power centre worked very well in the UPA-I government because it struck a balance between the Congress' quest for the liberalisation and the Left Fronts pro-poor policies. This was because of the fact that in the UPA-I government, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was in favour of a more open, liberalised economy and on the other hand, Sonia Gandhi supported pro-poor policies and committed to social development in the most inclusive sense.³⁰ This helped the Left Front to influence the policy of government and sustained its support for the government for four years. However, Sonia Gandhi had to resign from the post of chairperson of the NAC when the office of profit controversy³¹ broke out.

The very existence of coalition government and its stability depend upon how the power and patronages of government is distributed between the parties supporting the government, and upon the government's policy directions.³² The NDA government had allocated the portfolio to its constituents on the basis of their strength in the Parliament. The UPA-I government devised new formula for the portfolio distribution among its constituents. It was decided that for every three representatives, a party would be allocated one ministerial birth; second step of this agreement was the actual distribution of offices among the allies.³³ Despite, this new formula for distribution of portfolios, conflict arise in the UPA-I on the choice of portfolio and bargaining was so intense that it delayed the announcement of portfolio for several days even after government assumed office. Lalo Prasad Yadav was demanding to be the Deputy Prime Minister and Home portfolio, Sharad Pawar was demanding Defence for himself and Civil Aviation for Praful Patel, Ram Vilas Paswan was looking for the Railway or the Telecom. The Congress resolved the conflict by giving Railway to Lalo Prasad besides awarding some other ministries too to his party colleagues, Sharad Pawar was given Ministry of Agriculture and Food and Supplies, Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution and Civil Aviation was given to Praful Patel.³⁴ What really became troublesome for the Congress was that when its pre-poll ally i.e. DMK

openly criticized it of not keeping its promise. The DMK alleged that Congress backtracked from its promise of giving portfolios of Shipping, Personnel and Internal Security, and Finance with Revenue Department (for Ministry of State) to it.³⁵ The Congress understood the importance of DMK's support; hence provide the Shipping portfolio to DMK by taking it back from Chandrasekhar Rao of Telangan Rashtra Samithi (TRS) and the matter was solved. What really gave importance to this compromising attitude of the Congress Party was that the Congress was trying to sustain coalition government and co-exist, and work with the other parties. But in order to sustain the coalition government the power of the Prime Minister had been largely curtailed. The selection of the Council of Ministers had been the prerogative of the Prime Minister endowed to him by the Constitution of the India. But due to compulsions of coalition government this power of the Prime Minister is largely curtailed and the same happened with the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh too. "....The Congress allies in the UPA-I nominated their own ministers and bargained for their portfolio with Sonia Gandhi and not with Manmohan Singh," says Sanjay Baru.³⁶ More importantly, due to compulsions of coalition politics, UPA-I government included in its Council of Ministers some ministers having criminal cases pending in different courts of the country. This was the clear indication of criminalization of Indian politics. The BJP camp harshly criticized this step of the UPA-I government but the Congress did not succumb and instead put a counter blame upon the NDA for including Advani, and M.M Joshi in the NDA's Council of Ministers during its period of rule.

National Common Minimum Programme of UPA-1 (NCMP)

Like its predecessor's (United Front and NDA) the Congress led UPA-I government laid down the National Common Minimum Programme (NCMP) which gave direction to it. The programme was laid down after reconciling policy priorities of all the constituents of government and their election manifestos. The Left Front which agreed to support government from outside was largely based on the NCMP. The causes of debacle of NDA largely helped the UPA-I in formulating the NCMP and same is reflected in the introduction of the text which reads:

The people of India have voted decisively in the 14th Lok Sabha elections for secular, progressive forces, for parties wedded to the welfare of farmers, agricultural labour, weavers, workers and weaker sections of society, for parties irrevocably committed to the daily well-being of the common man across the country.³⁷

The guiding principles of the governance were laid down which were as following:³⁸

- (a) To preserve, protect and promote social harmony and to enforce the law without fear or favour to deal with all obscurantist and fundamentalist elements who seek to disturb social amity and peace.
- (b) To ensure that the economy grows at least 7-8 percent per year in a sustained manner over a decade and more and in a manner that generates employment so that each family is assured of a safe and viable livelihood.
- (c) To enhance the welfare and well-being of farmers, farm labour and workers, particularly those in the unorganized sector and assure a secure future for their families in every respect.
- (d) To fully empower women politically, educationally, economically and legally.
- (e) To provide for full equality of opportunity, particularly in education and employment for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, OBCs and religious minorities.
- (f) To unleash the creative energies of our entrepreneurs, businessmen, scientists, engineers and all other professionals and productive forces of society.

After releasing the NCMP Sonia Gandhi, said that NCMP reflected the mandate of the people and one that would cater to all sections of society, especially the poor.³⁹ The NCMP of the UPA-I government almost takes into consideration the views and policy priorities of all the constituents of UPA-I. The Left Fronts influenced the draft of the whole text and same could be discerned from the text readings. The text gave more emphasis on employment, minimum wages and unorganized sector. Furthermore, on agriculture the new text reads that a “comprehensive protective legislation will be enacted for agricultural worker”. The text also emphasize at providing good income to farmers. The demand of the Left

Front not to privatise the Public Sector Undertaking was taken into consideration and on that text reads that, “general profit making companies will not be privatised and the government will retain the existing Navratna companies”. But the text did not discard the privatisation altogether and reads that “loss making companies will be either sold or closed after the workers were given their compensations”. The demand of the Left Front on foreign policy was also taken into consideration, on which the text clearly opposes the unipolarity and stresses that steps would be taken to promote the multi-polarity along with close engagement with USA, without compromising the independent foreign policy. Despite the Left Fronts concern the demands of some small constituent like TRS, DMK, RJD, and PDP were also given place in the text. The NCMP of UPA-I government took into consideration the demand of DMK, MDMK and PMK by stating that all languages in the Eighth Schedule will be declared as official languages and Tamil will be declared as classical language. The demand of TRS for separate state was given place in the text of CMP which reads: “...the government will take this issue on an appropriate time and after due consideration and consensus”. For the state of “Bihar Special package of Backward States Grant Fund was announced which had been a demand of the RJD for a long time. The demand of the POTA abolition was inserted in the text of the NCMP which was almost the demand of all the constituents particularly Left Front and PDP of Jammu and Kashmir.

More importantly, the document (NCMP) incorporated some new policies which were considerably different from that of the past governments. The government pledged to enact the National Employments Guarantee Act which gives legal guarantee of at least 100 days work. The NCMP also pledged to enlarge the affirmative action including reservation in private sector for SCs and STs. The UPA government also pledged to work for the welfare of the socially and educationally backward section among religious and linguistic minorities, and even reservation was pledged to be given to them in education and employment.

The NCMP of the UPA-I government was somewhat a mirror image of the Common Minimum Programme (CMP) of United Front coalition government. The CMP of the both the coalition governments insisted on; providing 1/3 reservation for the women in Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha; reviewing Centre-State relation and

reactivating institutions like National Development Council and Inter-State Council; working for the weaker sections of the society, reinvestment of revenue generated by disinvestment in the social sector and limited foreign direct investment.⁴⁰ Therefore, we can say that there was more of continuity than change in the NCMP of UPA-I coalition government. Moreover, if the anti-NDA sentiment bind the different constituents of the UPA-I government, it was NCMP that sustains this relationship. In order to ensure smooth working of the coalition government, UPA Coordination Committee (UPACC) was set up which acted as a platform of consultation and discussion, for not only those who were in the government but also those who supported the government from outside. Complementary to it a specific Coordination Mechanism, the UPA government-Left Coordination Committee (UPALCC) was also set up. In order to ensure that government follows the NCMP, the National Advisory Council was established which not only worked as watch dog of the NCMP but also advised the government on implementation of NCMP and also provided inputs to the government in policy formulation.⁴¹

UPA-I and its Constituents at State Level

The stability of Congress led UPA-I government depended largely on how the Congress maintained its working relation with both the internal and external constituents of the UPA-I government. There were internal contradictions in the UPA-I government because the parties that were part of this coalition had in the past participated in the anti-Congress coalition governments. These parties were the main political opponents of Congress at the state level. Therefore, the stability of UPA-I government depended primarily on how Congress established a working relation with these political parties through state alignments so as to strengthen the UPA-I government. But soon after assuming the power at the Centre the Congress Party which was leading the UPA-I government tried to destabilise the SP government in Uttar Pradesh which was supporting it from the outside. The Congress Party tried to wean away RLD from the SP camp and tried to cut deal with BSP. This new coalition strategy though did not bear fruit for the Congress during the by-elections in UP, but it created friction within the UPA-I government by antagonising the CPI(M) for its

effort to destabilise the SP government and NCP which had alliance with Republican Party of India in Maharashtra.⁴² The Congress Party was trying to rebuild its traditional support base at states which was occupied by the very political parties supporting it at the centre. Therefore, there was contradiction between coalition and party building. Maintaining balance between these two extremes was very difficult for the Congress Party and same became evident in the subsequent assembly elections in Maharashtra where the UPA-I showed unity of purpose. The Congress Party and NCP struck an alliance to defeat the BJP and Shiv Sena, however, when the election results were announced friction developed between the two as the NCP of Sharad Pawar won higher number of seats, though it contested upon a comparatively lesser number of seats. The Contradictions surfaced on the issue of who will lead the coalition government. Sharad Pawar insisted that Chief Minister should be from the NCP. However, the matter was soon solved and NCP was given various ministerial posts of their choice, including the Deputy Chief Minister. The Congress Party high command sensed the growing clout of Sharad Pawar in the state. Therefore, to check the growing influence of NCP in the state, it tactically selected Vilasrao Deshmukh as the Chief Minister of the Maharashtra who was a rival to Sharad Pawar.⁴³ Thus the Congress Party was trying to consolidate the UPA-I at centre by strengthening the bond through state level alliance and simultaneously it did not want to leave its political space to be occupied by other parties.

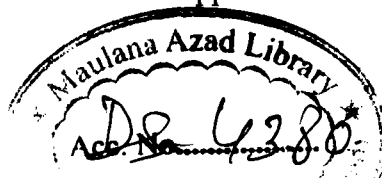
In the subsequent assembly election in Bihar and Jharkhand in February 2005, the UPA-I camp was largely divided and the Congress Party which was leading the UPA-I could not reconcile the parties which had fought the 2004 Lok Sabha election in alliance. In Jharkhand the Congress Party struck a unilateral alliance with JMM and ignored the RJD and Left Front. The anti-incumbency factor would have largely helped the UPA-I camp in Jharkhand but the division of votes in between the constituents resulted in reducing the negative impact of anti- incumbency to NDA. When, the election results were announced the BJP led NDA was short of majority and it became clear that it will be asked to form the government as no other party had more seats than the BJP. The Congress Party on the other had reconciled the other constituents whom it had ignored during the election like RJD and Left Front in order to form the government by constituents of UPA-I. In spite of inviting BJP to form

government in the state the Governor Syed Sibtey decided that, UPA led by Shibu Soren was better placed in the house and invited him to form the government.⁴⁴ The Congress Party leaders in the state also justified the decision of the Governor on the ground that NDA had failed to get majority, so it had forfeited its moral right to rule.⁴⁵ So it was clear that the Governor had shown partisan approach because it was the BJP led NDA which was better placed to stake the claim of forming government and it had approached the Governor first with required numbers to form the government. But the Governor gave first preference to Shibu Soren and he was asked to prove his majority on March 15, 2005. The NDA challenged this decision of the Governor in the Supreme Court and it was on the intervention of the Supreme Court that Shibu Soren was directed to prove his majority on 11 March, 2005.⁴⁶ But Shibu Soren could not prove his majority and it was on the order of Central Cabinet that Shibu Soren resigned on the same day. The Supreme Court called the appointment of Shibu Soren as total fraud on constitution.

In the Bihar assembly election the UPA-I camp was largely divided as Ram Villas Paswan was openly criticizing the RJD government in the state. The antagonistic attitude of LJP towards RJD was largely based on the perception that Lalo Prasad Yadav was instrumental in denying the railway portfolio to Ram Villas Paswan during the portfolio distribution in the UPA-I government. Despite this there were party constraints to the LJP which had substantial number of party members from Bhumihar caste which were extremely hostile to Lalo Prasad and any alliance between the two could have proved costly for the LJP.⁴⁷ In spite of reconciling the two constituents of the UPA-I at the centre, the Congress Party was more concerned about its own electoral calculations. Therefore, the Congress didn't enter into formal alliance with the RJD and LJP but also did not field its candidates in the seats held by the partner parties prior to the election.⁴⁸ The Congress's decision was largely based on the perception that not aligning with RJD will help it to wean away the upper caste vote from NDA camp and get away some part of the Muslim votes from the RJD.⁴⁹ However, the election result turned out to be a fractured verdict. RJD was the single largest party with not sufficient numbers to form the government. NDA camp was also short of majority but had numbers than RJD. The LJP was the main player which could have changed the fortunes if it had put behind its weight to RJD, Congress

combine. The Congress tried to reconcile RJD and LJP in order to form government of secular parties but failed. The rest of work was done by the Governor Buta Singh who sent a report to the central government and recommended the President's Rule in state on the ground that, he was convinced that no government could be formed without horse trading.⁵⁰ Buta Singh's decision to recommend President's Rule in the state was criticised by the opposition parties, as they alleged that UPA-I government has misused the office Governor so that to prevent the NDA from forming government in Bihar. In response to this accusation a Congress Party leader asserted that the UPA-I government took the decision in response to pressure exerted on it (the UPA-I government) at the centre by its constituents particularly RJD, NCP and by the Left Front to dissolve the assembly, so as to prevent formation of the NDA government in Bihar.⁵¹ Elections were held again in Bihar in October, 2005 and the UPA-I constituents again failed to stay together consequently allowing the NDA to form the government. After the elections were held Supreme Court pronounced that the proclamation of emergency in Bihar was unconstitutional. It was a real embarrassment for the UPA-I government which had used the office of governor for its own political interests. The UPA-I constituents failed to remain a cohesive unit in the Bihar and in Jharkhand elections and hence paved way for the NDA revival in these states. The Congress inspite of uniting the constituents of UPA-I gave preference to real politik of coalition politics as opposed to the principles of coalition dharma which it pledged to adhere at the time of framing the NCMP.

Though in Bihar and Jharkhand the UPA-I constituents remained divided but in Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry assembly elections held in May, 2006 they showed unity of purpose. The DMK in collaboration with the Congress, PMK, CPI, CPI (M), and the Indian Union Muslim League (IMUL) formed Democratic Progressive alliance in Tamil Nadu. Only MDMK which was part of the UPA-I government at centre switched its alliance towards AIADMK Front led by Jayalatiya.⁵² When the results were announced the Congress Party and DMK became more dependent on one another. This alliance was furthered strengthened in Pondicherry where the Congress formed the government with the outside support of DMK, PMK, and the Communists Party of India.



The UPA-I government remained intact mainly because its constituents had built a state level alliance. The first party to leave the alliance was TRS which deserted the alliance in August, 2006 because it felt that UPA-I government had backtracked from its promise of forming a separate state of Telengan. The UPA-I government was unable to evolve consensus on the issue of Telengan because CPI (M) was against this formation. The Pradesh Congress Party in Andhra Pradesh was also against such formation.⁵³ The Congress high command was also well aware about the poor show of TRS in the 2005 Municipal elections and in 2006 Panchayat elections so it did not try to bring back the TRS in the UPA-I government.

UPA-I Government and Left Front Policy Contradictions

The Left Front had extended its support to the Congress led UPA-I government with a view to keep the communal BJP out of the power. However, the Congress and the Left Front had the contradictory economic policy stances, though they had tried to reconcile and reduce these policy differences through NCMP but the differences continued to persist. After releasing the text of the NCMP the Left Front endorsed it but, simultaneously indicated its reservation on some economic policies. The Left Front's dual approach of support to secularism and its opposition to the economic policies of the government was bound to come under strain sooner or later.⁵⁴ The first contradiction between the UPA-I government and the Left Front got surfaced during the first budget of the new government, when Finance Minister P. Chidambaram proposed some economic policies that were considered more market oriented and deviant from the NCMP by the Left Front. The Finance Minister P. Chidambaram proposed the increasing sectoral caps on FDI in insurance, civil aviation and telecommunication. The Left Front argued that such a move will be against the national interest as the foreign investments in these sectors could drive out the domestic players and hence affect the economy as whole.⁵⁵ The Left Front vehemently criticised this government proposal on the ground that these proposals did not form part of the NCMP and reiterated that their support to the government is based on the NCMP. Finally, the consensus was built and the proposal to increase the ceiling on telecom was accepted and the proposal for increasing FDI in insurance and civil

the UPA-I government would depend upon how the UPA-I constituents will adhere to the NCMP. On another occasion, the Left Front and UPA-I government locked horns when the Deputy Chairman of Planning Commission Montek Singh Ahluwalia decided to include the representatives of World Bank, Asian Development Bank and Mckinsey, a private consultative firm, in the consultative panel of the Planning Commission for the midterm appraisal of the Tenth Five Year plan.⁵⁶ While defending his decision Montek Sing Ahluwalia gave the rationale that, there is a whole range of expertise available outside the government which should be utilised in order to benefit the country. But this argument failed to satisfy the Left Front and the Left economists heavily criticised it. In this context, CPI leader Atul Anjan remarks:

...these institutions have always been opposed to the concept of the planned development, would their recommendations strengthen the Planning Commission or weaken it? We all have seen that what they did to ruin the Latin American and South East economies.⁵⁷

Therefore, this decision was revoked and matter was buried. The disinvestment in Bharat Heavy Electrical Limitations (BHEL) created friction again between the UPA-I government and the Left Front. The government's decision of disinvesting 10 percent of BHEL's share was vehemently criticised by the Left Front. The UPA-I government argued that the decisions proposed were consistent with the NCMP and there is no issue of diverting from the NCMP and the decision is taken to accelerate the competition and consumer welfare. Chidambaram argued that proposed policy of disinvestment does not violate the coalition dharma, as enshrined in the NCMP, and NCMP had provided for the sale of share to retail investors. Furthermore, he added that NCMP provided that government should find the ways to revive the ailing PSUs and that money raised from the disinvestment will be utilised for the same purpose.⁵⁸ However, what gave impetus to the Left Front's demand to revoke the decision was that when it got support from a section of Congress Party particularly from Mani Shankar Aiyar, who argued that BHELs equity is being sought to be disinvested not to enhance competition or for the welfare of the workers but just to raise revenue.⁵⁹ The Left Front refuted this decision and described this move as a first step, towards privatisation and first serious violation of NCMP. This led the Left Front to boycott the further meetings of the Coordination Committee. Disinvestment

policy was jeopardised when other allies particularly DMK threatened the UPA-I government that it will withdraw its support if the government did not stop the proposed disinvestment in the Neyveli Lignite Corporation. The DMK opposed this decision because its opponent AIADMK was taking advantage of this situation and making inroads into the hitherto DMK-led workers.⁶⁰ The government finally decided to postpone all the decisions and proposals on disinvestment till further consultation and review because the withdrawal of DMK support could have brought more dependence of the government on the Left Front. Despite the pressure from the DMK to halt the disinvestment process the Left Front's decision to boycott further meetings of the coordination committee also alarmed the government about the stability of the coalition government. However, it was due to the intervention of the Sonia Gandhi that Left Front was brought back into the coordination committee.

Despite these contradictions on economic policies another irritant between the UPA-I government and the Left Front was the Indo-US relationship. The Left Front had criticised the NDA government constantly on the ground that it had made the country (India) a junior partner of USA in her imperialist design, and it (NDA) had sacrificed the India's commitment to Non-Alignment and multilateralism. Before finalizing the NCMP of UPA-I government the Left Front draw the attention of government on this issue and it (government) declared that it will pursue an independent foreign policy keeping in mind its past traditions and it will promote multi-polarity in world relations and oppose all attempts of unilateralism. Moreover, it declared that it will pursue closer relation and engagement with the USA. The Left Front had aroused their concern on different issues and even criticised the UPA-I government on signing the agreement of *New Framework for US-India Defence Relationship* which enlarged the scope of the *Next Step in Strategic Partnership*, and also India's vote against Iran in IAEA. But it never turned to be dangerous for the stability of the government until the government concluded the *123 Agreement*. The *Indo-US nuclear deal* all started when Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visited the US on July, 2005 and it was on July 18th, 2005 that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and President George W. Bush, in a joint statement, agreed in principle to have a civil nuclear cooperation. As per the joint statement the Indian government agreed to separate it's civil and nuclear establishment and to put the civil nuclear facilities

under the IAEA safeguards and in exchange, USA agreed to give India access to nuclear technology and fuel. However, prior to this Joint statements India concluded a ten years defence frame work agreement with the United States, which established close defence relation between the two nations in terms of defence strategy dialogue, strengthening military capabilities to promote security, intelligence exchanges and more importantly allowing India to have access to US military hardware.⁶¹ The Left Front did not press too much on the defence deal and India's vote in IAEA against Iran although; it registered its protest without too much pressure on the government. Zoya Hassan said:

... if there was one issue of principle on which Left Front could have withdrawn support, it was the defence deal agreement. After not withdrawing support the Left Fronts position was considerably weakened when it eventually decided to cut ties with the UPA.⁶²

The success of Left Front in vetoing the disinvestment proposal would have encouraged the Left Front to pressure the government through coordination committee, short of withdrawing support. The Left Front did not press this issue too much because it did not want to withdraw its support to the government which was on its initial stage and it could have affected the party in the assembly elections of West Bengal and Kerala. Despite this, the Left Front raised the issue of Congress pro-US approach during the assembly elections in Kerala and West Bengal, just to attract the Muslim voters. The Left Front's criticism and opposition to the nuclear deal became more lethal when the US Congress passed the *Henry J. Hyde Act* in December 2006 till then the progress on the nuclear deal was slow. The *Henry J. Hyde US-India peaceful Atomic Energy Act* was the enabling act which permits nuclear cooperation with India. The UPA-I government from the very beginning argued that the *Hyde Act* was a domestic US law and was binding on US only and the domestic law cannot apply to India and India would be only bound by the *123 Agreement*. The interpretation of the *Act* became the major issue in the whole process of *Indo-US nuclear deal*. The Left Front strongly criticised this agreement on the ground that it was a one sided agreement and would turn India into a subordinate ally to the imperial ambition of the US. This will have adverse impact on independent Indian foreign policy and will halt the nuclear programme and particularly its nuclear weapon programme. The Left Front's landslide victory in Kerala and West Bengal assembly

elections further strengthened their commitment to halt the nuclear deal. Moreover, the Congress Party was initially pessimistic about the nuclear deal and the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had to face scathing criticism from Congress Working Committee on July 2005 on the nuclear deal.⁶³ The Congress concern was that the deal would alienate the Party's Muslim vote base and will encourage the Left Front to withdraw support to the minority government. The Congress Party could not evolve consensus within on the nuclear deal. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh after returning from the USA tried to remove the apprehension of the opposition and Left Front on the nuclear deal and made a statement in the Parliament in this context, making it clear that there was no secret deal behind the public one and denied that India entered into a military alliance with the US to counter China. The Left Front did not press the issue too much but once the *Hyde Act* was passed it mounted pressure on the government to stop the proceedings of the deal. Their major contention was that many provisions of the *Hyde Act* were not consistent with the joint statement of July 18th, 2005. The Left Front put pressure on the government to renegotiate the deal. The Prime Minister Manmohan Singh didn't succumb to the pressure exerted by the Left Front and made his stand clear when he said:

...i have told them (Left Front) that it is not possible to renegotiate the deal. It is an honourable deal, the cabinet has approved it, and we cannot go back on it. I told them to do whatever they want to do, if they want to withdraw support so be it.⁶⁴

Therefore, the Left Front decided to mount more pressure on the UPA-I government by threatening it of withdraw support. The other allies of UPA-I government particularly, RJD, and DMK were not in favour of the deal and they were more concerned about the survival of the government because the early elections could have proved costly for the allies. More importantly, realising the conflict within the Congress Party on the issue and being the chairperson of UPA-Left Coordination Committee, Sonia Gandhi did not support the deal at the beginning because she was more concerned about the survival of the UPA-I government. Sonia Gandhi made her stand clear on the nuclear deal when she eloquently spoke in October 12, 2007 at Hindustan Times Summit and argued that that survival of the government was more important than the nuclear deal and the Congress would carry on its dialogue with the Left Front so as to seek their consent and would do nothing to force the issue and risk

the break with the Left Front. Sonia Gandhi's stand on the deal softened Manmohan Singh who in his address at the Hindustan Times Summit said, "...the failure of deal would not mean end of life nor was the UPA a one issue government".⁶⁵ It was in this context that UPA-I government, in order to diffuse the tension set up a committee in September 2007, to examine the implication of the *Hyde Act* on *123 Agreement*, and self reliance in the nuclear sector, and above all the ramification of the nuclear deal on the foreign policy and security cooperation. The Left Front allowed the UPA-I government to go ahead in their talk with the IAEA on *Safeguard's Agreement* but putting condition that such agreement could be accepted only after UPA-Left panel clears it for the final agreement. Zoya Hasan remarks:

... the Congress got the green signal about the end of Left's resistance to the deal. The Left Parties offered a window of opportunity which the government quickly grasped. This weakened the Left Front's hand in the face off as it lost its triumph card to delay the clearance of Indian specific safeguards with the IAEA, which could have scuttled the deal.⁶⁶

What led the government to fasten its process of operationalisation of deal were the concerns that the change in the USA political executive may imperil the deal. It was on 20th February 2008 that a delegation from US including John Kerry, Joseph Biden and Chuck Hagel visited India. They stressed on the government to conclude the deal by the end of July 2008 so that US Congress will approve the deal before the US Presidential elections.⁶⁷ On the other hand the Congress Party became successful in taking Mulayam Singh Yadav into confidence who had earlier withdrawn his support to the government on the same issue. The UPA-I government went ahead with the deal once the Congress top leadership was convinced that the government would not fall. Mulayam Singh was aided in switching his support to UPA-I government on nuclear deal by the statement issued by the former President A.P.J Abdul Kalam in support of the nuclear deal. Kalam being the Muslims and his support for the nuclear deal with US was exactly the kind of political backing Mulayam Singh needed to turn away from the United National Progressive Alliance (UNPA).⁶⁸ Furthermore, the Prime Minister and his close aides played a significant role in bringing the Samajwadi party on board.⁶⁹ Thus the UPA-I government concluded the agreement with the IAEA and backtracked from its commitment that the results of the talks with the IAEA would be deliberated in the coordination

committee. The result was that Left Front withdrew its support from the government. The Left Front tried until the last moment to convince Sonia Gandhi to save the government by dumping Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and replacing him with pro-Left Prime Minister but they failed. This was because of the fact that Manmohan Singh's credibility as a Prime Minister had risen immensely at that time and any antagonistic action against him could have proved disastrous for the Congress Party.⁷⁰ The Left Front in order to halt the progress of the deal tried to communalise the deal and echoed that the deal is anti-Muslim so as to get the support of the secular political parties having substantial Muslim support. Moreover, it was held that Left Front's stand against the nuclear deal was also a move to woo back its Muslim support in West Bengal which had moved away from it following the *Nandigram Episode*. But this plan of the Left Front did not bear fruit and it had to face the wrath of the electorate in the subsequent elections.

The Congress led UPA-I government in order to win the vote of confidence approached different political parties in order to ensure their support in it (UPA). The Congress bargained with the leader of Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, Shibu Soren, who demanded to be made as the Chief Minister of the Jharkhand and his son to be made as the Deputy Chief Minister but he could not get what he desired and the Congress offered him to be inducted in the cabinet.⁷¹ The Congress Party also tried to woo Ajit Singh and renamed the Lucknow airport after his father, a former Prime Minister, Charan Singh, but failed to satisfy him. The Congress also tried to bargain with JD (S) which demanded central ministerial berth and support of the Congress to topple the incumbent BJP government in Karnataka, but this also failed in this bargain.⁷² The Congress led UPA-I government also tried to woo TRS which bargained for the separate Telangana state, but the government did not accept this demand.⁷³ Although, UPA-I government didn't become successful in wooing JD (S), RLD, TRS which the Congress considered as its natural allies. It became successful in wooing SP of Mulayam Singh Yadav, who had withdrawn its support from the government earlier. The new love of SP for Congress was interpreted in different way. The Left Front believed that in return of support to the UPA-I government, the government would shield its (SP) leaders against pending corruption cases. But this was not only the reason, the political rivalry between SP and BSP was also another

factor that led the SP to support the Congress led UPA-I government.⁷⁴ On the other hand Mayawati, along with Left Front, TDP, and JVM formed the Third Front to bring down the government. Mayawati played a master stroke by offering political alignment with JD (S), RLD, TRS parties with aim of fighting the next election together and these political parties could not deny their support as she had a significant support across Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan.⁷⁵ On the day, set for the vote of confidence i.e. July 22, 2008 the Congress led UPA-I government secured the majority with 275 votes in its favour and 256 went against it, in the house of 542, with 10 abstentions. The opposition political parties heavily criticised the government for horse trading which had become the prominent feature of Indian coalition. The Congress leader Digvijay Singh said, “.... what opposition calls horse trading is lobbying in political parlance”.⁷⁶ However, the victory of the UPA-I government was stained by the allegations of bribery and manipulated absentees of the MPs. This really was the dark movement for Indian parliamentary democracy as the political parties violated all the norms of the parliamentary democracy for the electoral gains.

The Congress led UPA-I government after winning the vote of confidence interpreted it as a vote in favour of nuclear deal. Pranab Mukerjee said:

...It is a legal, constitutional and political victory for the government, the vote of confidence has not only cleared the way for the government to go forward with the India-U.S. nuclear deal in a rightful manner but has also accorded political sanction to the agreement since a majority of legislators of the Indian Parliament have put their stamp of approval on it.⁷⁷

Different interpretations came forward on the question, why the Congress led UPA-I didn't drop the nuclear deal and why it opt to seek vote of confidence? One such view suggests that the Congress led UPA government wanted to separate its way from the Left Front which had vetoed its most of the policies. The nuclear deal became the excuse for the government. The Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, after the vote of confidence eloquently said, “The Left Front vetoed in its every step on nuclear deal which is unacceptable, they wanted me to behave as their bonded slave”.⁷⁸ Therefore, the statement from the Prime Minister was a clear indication of government's intention.

The Left Front also used the nuclear deal to mobilize its electoral base which had started to move away from it due its pro-liberal policies in states like West Bengal. The nuclear deal gave them the opportunity to separate themselves from the UPA-I government and depict to its electorate its distinct ideological stance from other political parties. After the state assembly election in the West Bengal in 2006 the Left Front's support base started to erode. The social coalition of the middle class, several groups of civil society, Muslims, SCs and STs turned their back against the Left Front due to its contradictory positions — a pragmatic support for the Congress at the centre and at the same time giving the electoral challenge to the party in the West Bengal.⁷⁹ This dual approach proved very costly for the Left Front in the subsequent Panchayat election (2008) and the Parliamentary election (2009). Moreover, Sanjay Baru's revelations have given another dimension to the UPA-I government and Left Front contradiction on *Indo-US nuclear deal*. He remarks:

The Left's opposition evolved from being purely ideological into becoming a political ploy by which Prakash Karat aimed at marginalizing all the pro-PM elements within his own party. Surjeet Singh, Jyoti Basu, Buddhadeb Bhattacharya, and Sitaram Yechury were the moderates. Having up staged Surjeet Singh, Prakash Karat used the issue of opposition to nuclear deal as a way of consolidating his own position within the CPI (M).⁸⁰

Therefore, for both the Left Front and the Congress it was an electoral strategy. The Congress Party wanted to contain both sections of the electorate, i.e. middle class by nuclear deal and closer engagement in terms of trade with US, and poor by implementing the flagship programmes. The Left Front on the other hand wanted to resurrect it's support base in the West Bengal and Kerala where TMC of Mamta Banarjees and the Congress Party was making inroads to the traditional support base of the Left Front. Therefore it will be wrong to conclude that it was a one sided strategy.

Conclusion

The Lok Sabha election 2004 was not much different from the earlier Lok Sabha elections. What differentiates this election from earlier ones was that a loose bipolar contest was witnessed and both the national political parties strived to forge

alliances. When the election results were declared no national political party at individual level was in a position to form the government, and they have to rely on their pre-poll and post-poll allies to form the government. However, significantly, this time the Congress changed its attitude towards the coalition governance. In 1999 Lok Sabha election BJP became successful in wooing the regional forces by shedding its hardcore ideology and struck the pre-poll alliance with the regional and state based parties. On the other hand Congress did not opt for the alliance and went for the poll with not much allies that proved to be catastrophic for it, hence denied it a chance to form the government at the centre. However, in 2004 Lok Sabha election Congress under the leadership of Sonia Gandhi shed its differences with the regional forces and struck pre-poll alliance with the important, state and regional forces like RJD, DMK, TRS, JMM, LJP etc. The alliance with these forces made the difference in the election and ultimately Congress formed the UPA-I government with the outside support of the Left Front, SP, BSP etc. The Congress Party in order to sustain the government reconciled the election manifestos of the constituents of the UPA-1 government and laid down a comprehensive policy document which was called the National Common Minimum Programme (NCMP). The NCMP gave direction to the government and more importantly, sustained the Left Front support to the government for four years.

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Chapter - IV

Domestic Policies of UPA – I Government

The National Common Minimum Programme (NCMP) of the UPA-I government was comprehensive programme which mentioned government's policy priorities. As mentioned earlier that the NCMP was product of consensus which was developed among constituents of the UPA-I government. The NCMP enlisted domestic policies and foreign policies priorities of the UPA-I government which it pledged to pursue during its tenure. Following are some of the extracts from the NCMP document related to domestic policies.¹

- a) The government will enact a National Employment Act that will provide a legal guarantee for at least hundred days of employment every year at a minimum wages to one able-bodied person in every rural, urban poor and lower middle class house hold.
- b) The government will set up a National Commission to study the problems facing by enterprises, in the unorganized, informal sector. On the basis of the study the Commission will be asked to make recommendations to provide, technical, marketing and credit support to these enterprises and government will create a National Fund for this purpose.
- c) Adequate protection will be provided to all farmers from imports, particularly when international prices fall sharply.
- d) Public spending on education will be raised at least 6 percent of GDP, and at least half the amount out of it will be spend on the primary and secondary sector.
- e) The government will introduce a cess on all central taxes so as to finance the commitment to universal access to quality basic education.
- f) The government will reverse the trend of communalization of education. Steps will be taken to eradicate the communalization of school syllabus and for that a review committee of experts will be set-up.
- g) A central government funded national cooked nutritious mid-day meal scheme will be introduced at primary and secondary schools. Integrated Child Development Scheme will be universalized.
- h) The government will increase the public spending on health to at least 2-3 percent of the GDP and special emphasis on the primary health care will be given.

- i) Legislation related to providing one third reservations for the women's in Vidhan Sabha and in the Lok Sabha will be introduced. Legislation on domestic violence and against gender discrimination will be enacted.
- j) Public distribution system (PDS) will be strengthened particularly in the poorest and backward blocks of the country and women's and ex-servicemen's cooperatives will be involved in its management.
- k) A national dialogue will be started with all political parties, industry and other organization to see how best the private sector can full fill the aspirations of SCs, STs youth.
- l) A model comprehensive law to deal with the communal violence will be enacted and states will be encouraged to adopt that law, so that faith and confidence among the minorities will be generated.
- m) The government will set up a National Commission to see how best the welfare of socially and economically backward sections among religious and linguistic minorities, including reservations in education and employment is enhanced.
- n) Special attention will be given to augment and modernize the rural infrastructure consisting roads, irrigation, electrification etc.
- o) The government will redress growing regional imbalances both among states as well as within states, through fiscal, administrative, investment and other means. The government will create Backward State Grant Fund for states like Bihar, Assam and U.P that will create productive assets in these states.
- p) The government will make the National Development Council more effective instrument of cooperative federalism and steps will be taken to activate the Inter- State Council.
- q) A new Commission will be set up to look at Centre-State relations because over the years drastic changes took place in polity and economy of the country.

The National Common Minimum Programme gave the UPA-I government a framework for governance which it followed throughout its tenure. However, this chapter will examine only UPA-I government's Minority Development Policies, Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and Reservation for the OBCs in Higher education.

Minority Development Policies under the UPA-I Government

Minorities constitute an integral part of the India's multi-cultural milieu. A society consists of diverse identity groups and these groups can be identified on the basis of their affiliation to particular caste, religion, gender, language, culture, etc. India is also a land of diverse identities. The Constitution makers had given the plural nature of Indian society full reflection in the Constitution. The Indian Constitution has given the cultural rights of minorities space in the Part III of the Constitution (Fundamental rights). To be precise, who are the minorities, the National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992, identified, five religious Communities which include Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Zoroastrians and Sikhs.² After India's independence, the main stream discourse in India related to affirmative action remained limited to caste and ignored the other groups particularly the minorities. The major argument, in support of affirmative action for the lower caste group was that they have suffered perpetual injustice from historical times in Indian society. Therefore, affirmative action targeted towards the lower caste group was an instrument to compensate the past injustices. Thus, the word social justice became synonymy to caste and the other religious groups were excluded from this discourse, as no caste system was prevalent in religions like Islam and Christianity which are egalitarian in nature. Hence, the Constitution makers evolved a consensus on reservation and other preferential treatments meant for the lower castes and designed the Constitution in such a way which kept the scope for affirmative action open for lower caste groups which ultimately got reflected in the policy formation. In the initial stages of Constitution making, the Constitution makers considered and debated on two set of minority rights, one related to political and economic rights, and the other to religious, educational and cultural rights. However, after the partition the whole discourse underwent a dramatic change. The political safeguards for the minorities were thrown out of the Constitution debate on the ground that it is dangerous doctrine and endangers the secular fabric of the new born nation. The reservation for the minorities in the jobs and services also had to face the scathing criticism from the majority of members in the Constituent Assembly. Therefore, the discourse on minority rights was limited to, Fundamental Right to freedom of religion, special provision related to the protection of scripts and culture, and right of minorities to maintain their educational institutions, thereby devoid of any special and preferential treatment.

Over the years, due to the reservation policy and preferential treatment a significant improvement took place in the social-economic status of SCs, STs, on the contrary the position of minorities showed negative trend as there were no measures to promote their socio- economic development. Although the issue of minority welfare got surfaced on several occasions from time to time but no such concrete steps were taken to address this issue. Mrs Indira Gandhi in 1980 took a bold step by setting a High Power Panel on Minorities under the Chairmanship of Dr. Gopal Singh, to study the conditions of the minorities. The Committee in its report concluded that the poor among the Muslims could not avail the opportunities in education, employment and economic activities because of isolation and various historical factors. In this context Indira Gandhi introduced the Prime Minister's 15 Point Programme in 1983 with an objective to provide a sense of security to minority communities and ensure their rapid socio-economic development.³ However, the announced policies couldn't achieve anything substantial because of the two reasons. First, the fact that there has been such a strong partisan elements, with each government largely discard the labours of previous governments and introduce new policy initiatives as far as minorities were concerned, thereby resulted in discontinuity in the minority policy. Second, most of the issues which were important for the development of minorities like education, security, employment are much decided by the state governments than the national governments. The Central government can promote and can give monetary support to the state governments through centrally sponsored schemes but in the end it cannot do much without the political will at the state level.⁴

However, the 2004 Lok Sabha election witnessed a change in the government at the national level. The BJP led NDA coalition government was ousted out of power by the new Congress led UPA-I government. The new coalition government was the conglomeration of secular parties which fought the election on the backdrop of Gujarat incidence and promised to revive the secular and inclusive politics.⁵ The Congress and its pre-poll allies in their election manifestos and during the election campaigning put emphasis on secular issues particular, minority security, and their socio-economic upliftment which ultimately proved costly for the NDA. The stand of Congress led alliance on these issues showed its effect when the election results were announced. The Congress and its allies got 79 percent of Muslim votes in Bihar, 78

percent in Tamil Nadu, 66 percent in Assam, 60 percent in Gujarat, 55 percent in Karnataka and 47 percent in Maharashtra⁶. The minority support to the Congress and its allies proved vital for the formation of UPA-I government and thus pushed the new government to relook the minority concerns. The mandate to the UPA-I coalition government on behalf of the minorities was clear, to go beyond identity politics and promote their socio- economic development. In this context the UPA-I coalition government formulated the NCMP and incorporated these concerns on priority basis. The new government living up to its commitment to the NCMP took the following important steps, a National Monitoring Committee for Minorities Education was constituted, a National Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities under the Chairmanship of Justice Ranganath Mishra was constituted to examine the possible criteria for reservation among religious and linguistic minorities, a High Level Committee under the Chairmanship of Justice Rajinder Sachar to provide a comprehensive report on the socio-economic and educational status of Muslims was constituted, the Ministry of Minority Affairs was created for the overall minority development, Multi-sectoral development schemes for the overall area development in 90 minority concentration districts was started, the Prime Ministers 15 Point Programme was revamped and renamed as Prime Ministers New 15 point programme which focussed action on issues particularly linked to the social, economic and educational upliftment of the minorities.⁷

Findings of Sachar Committee related to educational, economic and employment status of Muslims

The formation of the Sachar Committee to examine the socio-economic status of the Muslims was a major development as far as the minority development was concerned. The Committee in its report highlighted the plight of the Muslims by finding out that Muslim community by and large are lagging behind to other communities in terms of their access to public and private sector jobs, education, infrastructure, and credit and, more importantly, the gap between the Muslims and other communities have not filled over the years rather had it increased in some dimensions.⁸ Some of the important findings of the Committee related to the Muslims educational status, economic status and representation in the elite civil services of Indian are as under.⁹

Education Status

a) The literacy rate among Muslims in 2001 was 59.1 percent which is far below the National average of 65.1 percent and higher than SCs and STs, but lower than the remaining category of 'All others' which had literacy rate of 70.8 percent.

b) As many as 25 percent of Muslim children in the 6-14 year age group have either never attended school or have dropped out. Muslims have the highest dropout rate in the country.

c) The main aim of setting 'Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya was the objective of excellence, coupled with equity and social justice" (National Policy on Education, 1986). The scheme in rural areas was expected to reduce the supply side constraints on good quality education, however the Muslim participation in these schools too is unsatisfactory.

d) The disparity in Graduation level education attainment rates is widening since 1970's between Muslims and all other categories in both urban and rural areas.

e) Only one out of the 25 Under-Graduate students and one out of the 50 Post-Graduate students is a Muslim in premier colleges. The share of Muslims in all courses is low, particularly at the PG level and marginal in the science stream.

f) Un-employment rates among Muslim graduates is the highest as compared to the other communities in India both among the poor and the non-poor.

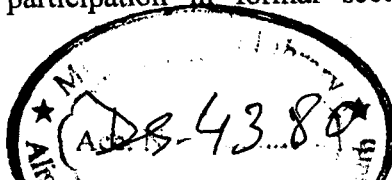
g) Only 3% of Muslim children among the school going age go to Madrassas. Muslim parents are not averse to mainstream education or sending their children to affordable government schools. Muslims also preferred regular school education; however, the access to government schools for Muslim children is limited.

Economic and Employments status of Muslims as per the Sachar Committee findings¹⁰

a) The participation of Muslim workers in salaried jobs (both in the public and the private sectors) is quite low as is in the case of SC/ST workers.

b) The participation of Muslims in regular jobs in urban areas is quite limited compared to even the traditionally disadvantaged SCs/STs.

c) A significantly larger proportion of Muslim workers are engaged in small proprietary enterprises and their participation in formal sector employment is



significantly less than the national average. The participation of Muslim workers in the informal sector enterprises is much higher.

d) The Muslim regular workers are the most vulnerable with no written contract and social security and benefits.

e) Muslim regular workers get lower daily earning (salary) in both public and private jobs compared to other social-religious categories (SRCs).

f) The presence of Muslims was found to be only 3 percent in the IAS, 1.8 percent in the IFS and 4 percent in the IPS Muslim community

g) Muslims has a representation of only 4.5% in Indian Railways. Almost all (98.7%) of them are positioned at lower levels.

h) The share of Muslims in security agencies is around 4 percent. Representation of Muslims in the Education Department is just 6.5% and 7.3% in the Home department. Overall the share of Muslims as police constables is only about 6%. The presence and Participation of Muslims in the Judiciary has been a major point of concern.

Recommendations of Sachar Committee

The Sachar Committee in its comprehensive report highlighted the development deficit among the Muslims as a group in various dimensions of their day to day life. The Committee find out that the socio economic status of Muslims in India is better than the SC and ST, but worse than the Hindu OBC and other. Furthermore, the Sachar Committee finding provide enough evidences to initiate measures for the socio- economic development of minorities'. The report brought the minority development in the official discourse and will become point of reference for the future initiatives. In the light of the above findings the Committee made following recommendations, so as to address the socio-economic deficit among the Muslims. Some of the important among them are as under.¹¹

- a) To constitute an Equal Opportunity Commission to deal with the concern of deprived groups.
- b) The process of evaluating the content of school text books should be initiated and institutionalised.
- c) To work out mechanism, so that Madrasas can be linked with the higher secondary school boards that will ensure the pass outs from Madrassas to enter the mainstream education.

- d) Madrassa degrees should be recognised for the eligibility in the competitive examinations.
- e) To establish legal mechanism which will deal with grievance of discrimination against minorities on the issues of employment, housing, schooling and obtaining bank loans.
- f) To ensure diversity in the student population at college and university level, the UGC should link financial allocation to these institutions with the diversity in the student's population.
- g) An alternate admission criterion should be devised so that the admissions to the most backward among the all SRCs (socio-religious categories) in the universities will be ensured.
- h) To set up delimitation procedure that rules out reserving constituencies with high minority population for the SCs.
- i) To set up National Data Bank, which will act as a source and maintain relevant data related to various SRCs.
- j) Within the Muslims Arzals should be designated as SCs or Most Backward Castes and affirmatives actions should be targeted towards this group.

UPA-I Government's Policy Initiatives after Sachar Committee Recommendations

In the light of Sachar Committee recommendations, the United Progressive Alliance-I (UPA-I) government at the Centre introduced series of ameliorate measures, particularly the *Multi-Sectoral Development Programmes (MSDP)* and the *Prime Ministers New 15 Point Programme (PM-N15P)* to address the development deficits faced by religious minorities in general and by the Muslims in particular. The *MSDP* was an area development approach which was launched in 2008. It aimed at upgrading the infrastructure in 90 minority concentrated districts by supplementing the funds of ongoing government schemes and public provisioning rather than those that would specifically target specific deprivation of the Muslims.¹² The rationale behind the area development approach was that the infrastructural development in these minority concentrated districts will automatically benefit minorities in general and the Muslims in particular. The UPA-I government did not go beyond area development approach due to fear that the community specific programmes could

have been legally challenged. The government did propose minority Sub- Plan in the 11th Five Year Plan but it was vehemently opposed at various levels, particularly by the Planning Commission.¹³ Furthermore, the government had to face scathing criticism from the BJP, the main opposition political party. The BJP criticised the government on the Constitutional grounds and argued that special allocations for disadvantaged groups based on caste or gender had its roots in the Constitution but there is no mention for such a specific allocations to Muslims and other minorities.¹⁴

The *MSDP* was the follow-up programme to the Sachar Committee findings that the Muslim community are concentrated in locations with poor infrastructure and needed targeted intervention in order to bring it socially and economically at par with the mainstream. However, the *MSDP* which was launched in 90 minority concentrated districts across 20 states cover less than half of the Muslim population. It covers only 30 percent of the Muslim population ignoring entirely the Muslims in non-minority concentrated districts.¹⁵ A better way might have been to make blocks, even villages and hamlets, rather than districts, the unit of planning projects.¹⁶ Furthermore, there was the poor utilisation of funds meant for the *MSDP*. In the 11th Five Year Plan, the *MSDP* was allocated 39 percent of the total budget Ministry of Minority Affairs (total amount to the Ministry of Minority Affairs was 7000 crores out of which the *MSDP* was allocated 3747 crores).¹⁷ The Ministry of Minority Affairs (MMA), had reported in the Parliament that 80 percent of the funds meant for the *MSDP* had been spend, but the most of the money had remained at the state level and district level only meagre amount of 34 percent had reached to the targeted population.¹⁸ Furthermore, the other problem which was found in some districts across some states in the proper implementation of the programme was the bias on the part of bureaucracy against the minority. In some districts like South 24 Parganas in West Bengal, Darbhanga in Bihar, and Mewat in Haryan, Bagpat of Uttar Pradesh and Araria of Bihar, Muslims did not got benefitted by this programme.¹⁹ The UPA-I government in order to ensure the effective monitoring of the minority welfare schemes in the country appointed 229 national level monitors and more importantly, National Productivity Council of India (an autonomous body under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry) was endowed with the task to monitor the implementation of various schemes under the MMA and its organisation.²⁰

The other initiative took by UPA-I government in context of the Sachar Committee report was that it revamped the *Prime Ministers 15 Point Programme* for the minorities. The *Prime Ministers New 15 Point Programme* covers; enhancing opportunities for education, equitable share in economic activities and employment, improving the conditions of living of minorities and prevention, and control of communal riots. There had been various government schemes meant for the underprivileged sections of the society and the disadvantaged sections of the minorities also got benefited. However, to make sure that the benefits of various government scheme flows equitably to minorities, *the Prim Ministers New 15 Point Programme* envisages location of a certain proportion of development project in the minority concentration areas and also provides that, wherever possible, 15 percent of targets and outlays under various schemes should be earmarked for the minorities.²¹ *The Prime Ministers New 15 Point Programme* was the broad programme and involves various Ministries. Seven Union government Ministries/Departments were involved in implementing the programme. The Ministries /Department and the programmes implemented by them under the *Prime Minister New 15 Point Programme* are as under.²²

- a) Ministry of Rural Development was implementing Indira Awas Yojana (IAY), Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY), National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP)
- b) The Ministry of Urban Development was implementing Urban Infrastructure Development Scheme for Small and Medium Towns (UIDSSMT)
- c) The Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation implemented programmes like Integrated Housing Slum Development Programme (IHSDP), Basic Services for Urban Poor (BSUP), Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SJSRY)
- d) The Ministry Labour and Employment industrial Training Institutes (ITIs)
- e) The Ministry of School Education and Literacy implemented, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV), and Madrassa modernisation programmes

- f) The Ministry of Women and Child Development implemented Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and Department of Finance implements the Priority Sector Lending (PSL) to Minorities.
- g) The Ministry of Minority Affairs implements five scholarship schemes apart from the Maulana Azad Education Foundation. These schemes include, Pre-matric, Post-matric, Merit-cum-Means scholarships, Free coaching and allied scheme for competitive examinations, and Maulana Azad National Fellowship for minority students pursuing M.Phil. and Ph.D.

The *Prime Ministers New 15 Point Programme* was a comprehensive programme and touches all the relevant dimensions of the minority development and upliftment and some of the major achievements of the program reported by the Ministry of Minority Affairs can be gauged from the following figures.²³

- a) 70,000 Anganwadi Centres were operationalised in minority concentration blocks under the Integrated Child Development Scheme.
- b) 33,000 new primary schools/upper primary schools have been opened under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in the districts with substantial minority population since 2006-07 till 2012-13. Similarly, 24,000 primary/upper primary schools have been constructed in such districts under (SSA) in the same period. 555 Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs) have been sanctioned in these districts under SSA.
- c) Under the scheme of Indira Awas Yojana (IAY), more than 23.90 lakhs houses were constructed for the minorities with the expenditure of 7961 from 2006-07 to 2012-2013.
- d) The projects of 21.230 crores were sanctioned under the different components of JnNURM, in the cities and towns having substantial minority population.
- e) National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation (NMDFC) had distributed concessional loans of 320 crore to more than 73,000 minority beneficiaries'. Loan for more than 1,99,000 crores were extended by banks to minority communities under Priority Sector Lending.
- f) A total number of 18,53,97,59 against the targeted number of 10,92,72,68 Minorities students got benefited by various types of scholarships under Minority schemes of the

Central Government during the three years period 2010-11, 2011-12 and 2012-13 amounting of Rs. 3320.06 crores. It includes four schemes Pre-matric, Post- matric, Merit-cum and Maulana Azad Foundation.²⁴

The MMA was made the nodal ministry to monitor the implementation of the Sachar Committee recommendations. The function of the MMA was to introduce the developmental programmes that will uplift the socio-economic status of minorities, coordinating between the central and state agencies to implement minority related schemes and programmes, moreover, to monitor and evaluating these. Wajahat Habibullah said:

.... It (MMA) has failed to effectively address the poverty and exclusion of Muslims, a shortcoming arising principally from weak coordination with other central and state departments, which are not answerable to MMA for inadequacy in implementation. The Prime Minister's New 15 Point Programme suffered the most because of this: no single authority actually owns this programme as it only call for earmarking 15 percent of outlay and physical targets for minorities in other selected welfare schemes without prescribing any mechanism, making it a top-up approach.²⁵

Furthermore, *The Prime Ministers New 15 point Programme* just like the *Multi-Sectoral Development Programme* relate the same story pertaining to scheme design and operationalisation at the district level. In the programme, some schemes have followed an area-based approach for infrastructure development and Gram Panchayats were considered as the unit of implementation for infrastructure projects and not minority-dominated hamlet or ward.²⁶ Hence, in many places the minorities could not avail from the programmes because projects where not situated in the minority concentrated areas. Moreover, In order to address the large scale deprivation of the Muslim it is needed to set in motion specific policy measures and adequate coverage of schemes along with requisite budgetary allocation in the 15 Point programme. These scheme should have sufficient scope for tailor- made intervention that fits specific needs of Muslim community.²⁷

The UPA-I government accepted almost all the recommendations of the Sachar Committee, however at the implementation level it put more emphasis on the community targeted programmes rather than on mainstreaming the minority development. The Sachar Committee didn't talk about the reservation for the

minorities explicitly because the Committee was not mandated for it. The Sachar Committee preferred the mainstreaming and hence suggested the equitable allocation of available jobs in the public sector amongst the Muslims. Moreover, the Committee suggested providing incentives to the private sectors to encourage the diversity in the work force.²⁸ It was in this context that the UPA-I government under *Prime Ministers New 15 Point Programme* declare that special considerations would be given to the minorities in the recruitment process at Central and State level along with the Public Sector Undertaking but did not suggest through what instrument the representation of the minorities' will be increased and given fair share in proportion to their population. The absence of reservation to minorities' in general and the Muslims in particular had great bearing on their representation in the government and non-government sectors. It can be gauged from the following data on recruitment. The share of minorities' in the total recruitment in Central Ministries/Departments, and Central Public Undertakings since 2006 showed steady increase in figure and percentage but in relation to the their total population it is not too much. It was mere 6.93 percent in 2006-07, it reached to a figure of 9.09 percent in 2008-09, in 2009-2010 it showed negative trend and slipped to 7.28 percent, and reached 10.18 percent in 2010-11.²⁹

In order to, address the issue of under-representation of minorities in government employment. The UPA-I government had constituted a National Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities under the Chairmanship of Ranganath Mishra, to examine the possible criteria for reservation among religious and linguistic minorities. The Commission submitted its report during UPA-I government but it was during the UPA-II that the report was tabled before the Parliament. The Commission recommended to reserve 15 percent in the Central services for linguistic and religious minorities and state government for the minorities' out of which 10 percent was recommended to be reserved for the Muslims and 5 percent for other Minorities'. Furthermore, the Commission recommended that the Presidential order of 1950 should be amended so that SC status should be given to Dalits in all religions.³⁰ The UPA-II tabled the report in the Parliament without any action taken report and did not put forward how and when decision on the main recommendations related to reservation for the minorities will be taken. The government couldn't decide on the issue mainly because of practical and electoral constraints. Firstly, the Supreme Court had approved ceiling that quota cannot go

beyond 50 percent. If government wants to go beyond this it had to amend the Constitution which was going to be difficult for the government. Secondly, the government had the alternative which was also recommended by the Ranganath Mishra to bring socially and educationally backward Minorities within the OBC category with a sub quota, but it cannot evolve consensus on this issue because the UPA-II government constituents had substantial support of the Hindu OBCs. The Congress Party in December 2011 before the Uttar Pradesh Assembly election unilaterally, announced that the government will carve out sub-quota of 4.5 reservations for the Minorities' from the total OBC quota of 27 percent.³¹ The decision of the Congress Party was based on its electoral calculation to wean away the Muslim support from the secular parties in general and SP, RJD and JD (U) in particular. However, the UPA-II couldn't proceed further on the issue due to the coalition constraints and its decision on minority reservation just remain a rhetoric. The government also could not evolve consensus on the other recommendation of the Ranganath Commission to give the SC status to Dalits Muslims and Dalits Christians by amending the Presidential order of 1950. The constraints were mainly from the Hindu Dalit MPs and Upper-caste Hindus who would have blocked any attempt on this issue.

National Employment Guarantee Act (MNERGA, 2005)

Employment Growth Rate in India

The Constitution of India has ensured equality for all irrespective of the caste, creed, color and sex. Although it has created equality in some areas e.g. right to vote, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, equality of opportunity but failed to provide right to work and employment which would have ensured minimum standard of living to a huge section of population. It was the Congress Party under the leadership of Narasimha Roy in 1991 that brought drastic reforms in Indian economy and adopted neo-liberal economic policies. The new economic strategy resulted in unprecedented growth; however, the high economic growth has not been matched by the growth of productive employment. Employment growth was high as 2.82 percent per annum over the five year period 1972-73 to 1977-78; it showed a negative trend and fell to 1.02 percent per annum over the five year period 1993-94 to 1999-2000.³²

The major reason for this declining trend in the employment growth rate in aggregate is due to the fact that the major sector of employment that is agriculture had shown the negative trend in the employment growth. While the rate of growth in agriculture employment was high as 2.32 percent per annum during the five year periods 1972-1978, during 1993-94 to 1999-2000 it was just 0.06 percent.³³ Therefore, over the years the growth in India had been mostly jobless and even sometimes resulted in job loss. However, the major decline in the employment growth can be seen at rural level, it grew at an annual rate of 0.58 which was meager in comparison to the growing rate of rural labor force.³⁴ In, absence of viable employment opportunities, and distress created by the high debts, led to the mass suicides in various states. According to K. Nagaraj (Published in National Crime Record Bureau), “....the rate of suicides in farmers is high compared to the general population. The suicide rate among the farmers has been increasing since from 2001 while the general rate has been more or less stable.” Furthermore, he said, “....that states like Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Madhya accounted for the two third of the total farmers deaths”.³⁵

Government's Employment Wage Programmes

In order to tackle the rural unemployment the government of India over the years introduced various schemes and programmes to improve the conditions of rural people by providing wage employments. The government of India introduced initially wage employment programmes as pilot projects, such as Rural Manpower Programme (RMP) in 1960-61, Crash Scheme for Rural employment (CRSE) in 1971-72, Drought Prone Area Programme was started as Rural work Programme (RWP) in 1972, Small Farmers Development Agency (SFDA), Marginal Farmers & Agricultural Labour Scheme (MF&AL) to the poorest of the poor. However, these pilot projects were then converted into complete wage-employment programmes, in 1977 in the form of Food for Work Programme (FWP), in 1980's in the form of National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) and Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP), in 1989 Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY), in 2001 Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SRY) were introduced.³⁶ No doubt, these wage employment programmes have provided some relief to the rural people but they were not enough in view of the high magnitude of the unemployment problem in rural

areas. Furthermore, the decline in the employment rate shows that these schemes have not succeeded in increasing employment. Moreover, these programs didn't make certain that employment will be available to rural households on demand, as all of them were allocation-based programmes.³⁷

Due to the absence of viable employment opportunities and the burden created by the heavy debts resulted in mass suicides in the rural areas of India and this became alarming. Jeelani points out:

... from 1997 to 2001 more than 80,000 farmers committed suicide, the number of indebted farmers increased from 26 percent in 1991 (out of 575 million people dependent on agriculture) to 48.6 percent in 2001 (600 million dependent on agriculture), 8 million quit farming altogether.³⁸

The alarming farmer's suicides resulted in civil society campaigns to press the government to take measures and enact the *Employment Guarantee Act*. It was in this context that a civil society organization in Rajasthan filed Public Interest Litigation at the Supreme Court in mid-2001, which requested the Supreme Court to intervene by directing the government to provide immediate open-ended employment in the draught affected areas of Rajasthan and ultimately the drought relief programmes was launched in 2001 and 2003. The Supreme Court's favorable judgment in favor of *Right to food in 2001* gave further impetus to the national campaign for the *Employment Guarantee Act*. Jean Dreze says, "This was also an opportunity to create interest in a national employment guarantee act among the leaders of various political parties."³⁹ The Congress Party under the leadership of Sonia Gandhi embraced the idea and got convinced that rural unemployment was the national issue and the *Employment Guarantee Act* could be a viable option to tackle it. Therefore, it was in Guwahati session of the All India Congress Committee in May 2002, that Congress Party promised to enact Employment Guarantee Act if it returned to power at the Centre and incorporated the same in its election manifesto in 2004 Lok Sabha election. More importantly, the Congress believed that it would enhance the parties' rural appeal and would challenge the NDA's *India Shining campaign*.⁴⁰ The Congress Party cornered the NDA's *India Shining campaign* with campaign for of *secular and inclusive India*. The 2004 Lok Sabha election witnessed the defeat of the BJP led NDA and formation of the Congress led UPA-I government at national level. The major sections of Indian society did not agree with the NDA's *feel good campaign*

and, hence led some commentators to interpret it as revolt against urban biased and non-equitable economic reforms. However, the CSDS analysis on 2004 Lok Sabha elections partially agree with this conclusion and agreed that issues particularly employment had played a role in debacle of the NDA.

Enactment of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Act

The Congress led UPA-I government laid down the National Common Minimum Programme (NCMP) in which employment guarantee act was pledged to be enacted, the text on this issues reads as, “The UPA government will immediately enact a National Employment Guarantee Act. This will provide a legal guarantee for at least 100 days of employment to begin with on asset-creating public works programmes every year at minimum wages for at least one able-bodied person in every rural, urban poor and lower middle-class household. In the interim, a massive food-for-work programme will be started”.⁴¹ However, when the first draft of *Employment Guarantee Act* was prepared, it faced scathing criticism from the corporate entities, institutions like Planning Commission and Ministry of Finance. The first draft of the *National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA)* was prepared by the National Advisory Council (NAC) under the chairmanship of Sonia Gandhi. The draft was based on the previous drafts prepared by the civil society groups. The Planning Commission criticized the draft’s, *guaranteed employment clause*, on the ground that it would make the implementation of the programme too costly; thereby a diluted draft was introduced in the Parliament on December 2004.⁴² After, being tabled in the Parliament the draft was referred to the Parliament Standing Committee on Rural Development. At the Standing Committee level the draft was again vehemently criticized particularly from Kalyan Sing of the BJP who headed the Standing Committee on Rural Development at that time as a result further meetings on *NREGA* were delayed for the next six months.⁴³ The civil society groups resorted to broad level campaign against the diluted bill and insisted on the government to revamp the original draft of the bill. The campaign got further impetus when the NAC, the Left Front and some organizations supported the campaign. Ultimately, the Standing Committee on Rural Development accepted most of the demands of the campaigners and the bill was finally tabled in the Parliament on August 2005 and it was on 23

August 2005 that the *NREGA* was passed in the Lok Sabha. Jean Dreze Says, “ the major opposition to the *NREGA* came from the corporate sponsored media and related forms and they succeeded in diluting the act in some important respects, inspite of its tremendous popular appeal, is a telling symptom of the elitist nature of the Indian democracy”.⁴⁴

MGNREGA and its Implementation

The enactment of *NREGA* was a historic movement in the Republic of India because it gave the legal guarantee of employment in rural areas to anyone who is willing to do unskilled manual work at statutory minimum wage. Eligible applicant who didn't receive work within the fifteen days of requesting it, will get the unemployment allowances of one fourth of the minimum wage for the first thirty days and one half thereafter and the liability of paying unemployment announces fall on the states. The *Act* guaranteed 100 days of unskilled wage employment to every rural house hold per year. The *Act* states that, one third of the persons whom work had to be allocated must be women. The *Act* came into force on 2 February 2006, when in the first phase 200 most backward districts of the country were covered. In the second phase, 2007-2008 an additional 130 districts were covered and it was on April 1, 2008 that it was extended to whole India in phase third and covered the remaining 285 rural districts. The *National Rural Employment Guarantee Act* was renamed in 2 October, 2009 as the *Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)*. The work permissible under this *Act* were mainly public works in nature which consists of, water conservation and water harvesting, drought proofing which includes also afforestation and plantation, rural connectivity, flood protection, renovation of traditional water bodies, land development, Irrigation infrastructure etc. The main purpose of the *Act* in permitting the above said work was to create useful and durable rural assets in rural areas and strengthen the natural base of the economy. The permissible works under the *Act* resulted in the enhancing productivity and regeneration of the natural resource base and moreover, strengthening its potential for the generating environmental benefits.⁴⁵ The *Act* seeks to address the immediate rural problems of mass deprivation and the need for the employment and livelihood to prevent the endemic hunger. The new act provides a safety net for the poor rural households by providing fall back employment sources when other employment

alternatives are scarce and not enough.⁴⁶ The *Act* strengthened the process of decentralization by giving the local governance bodies like Panchayat, a role in the planning, implementation and monitoring of the programme.

The *MGNREGA* brought rural revolution in the sense that most of the vulnerable sections of Indian society overwhelmingly, participated in it and this resulted in enhancement of their capability. Amratya Sena says, "NREGA reaches out to the people and gives them income. It is an enhancer of capability. It enhances their self-respect and participation in life and community".⁴⁷ Furthermore, one important characteristics of this programme is that it is more socially inclusive in the sense that it disproportionately involves women, SCs, and STs workers.⁴⁸ The *MGNREGA* is the world's largest wage earning programme and some of the important achievements of the programme since its inception are as under.⁴⁹

- a) During the first years of its implementation (2006-2007, which covered 200 districts) 2.10 crore households were employed and 90.5 crore person-days of employment were generated. In the second phase (2007-2008, which covered the additional 135 districts) 3.39 crore were households employed and 143.59 crore person-days of employment were generated. In the final phase (2008-2009, covered the whole rural districts of India), 4.51 crore households were employed and 216.32 crore person-days of employment were generated. In 2012-2013, 4.98 crore household were employed and 229.86 person-days of employment were generated.
- b) Out of the total expenditure on *MGNREGA*, major proportion was spent on the wages. In 2006-2007 total expenditure under *MGNREGA* was 8823.35 crore and out of which the total wage expenditure was 5842.37 crore (that is 66 percent out of the total expenditure of *MGNREGA*), in 2007-2008 total expenditure under *MGNREGA* was 15856.89 crore and out of which expenditure on wages was 10738.47 crore (that is 68 percent out of the total expenditure on *MGNREGA*), in 2008-2009 financial year total expenditure under *MGNREGA* was 27250.10 crore out of which 18200.03 crore were total expenditure on wages (that is 67 percent were form the wage expenditure out of the total expenditure under *MGNREGA*). In the financial year 2012-2013 total expenditure on *MGNREGA* was 39657.04 crore out of which 27128.36 crore was wage expenditure (that is 72 percent out of the total expenditure

under *MGNREGA*). The main aim of the programme was to provide wage employment so that livelihood resources base of the rural poor would be strengthened.

- c) Out of the total person-days of employment generated the participation of SCs, STs and women's is major. In 2006-2007 SCs and STs participation was 61 percent and women's participation was 40 percent, in 2007-2008 SCs and STs participation was 56 percent and women's participation was 43 percent, in 2008-2009 SCs and STs participation was 54 percent and women's participation was 48 percent, and in 2012-2013 the participation of SCs and STs was 30 percent and the women's participation was 51 percent.
- d) A lot of public works were taken under this programme and completed. in 2006-07 total works taken was 8.3 lakhs out of which 3.87 works were completed in the same year, in 2007-2008 total works taken was 17.88 lakhs and out of which 8.22 lakhs works were completed, in 2008-2009 total works taken was 27.75 lakh out of which 12.14 lakhs was completed, and in 2012-2013 total works taken 106.51 lakhs and out of which 25.60 was completed.

The *Act* had far reaching socio-economic and political significance. The *Act* protects the rural poor households from the poverty and hunger when other alternative work is not available, it slows down the migration to urban areas, empowers the marginalized sections of the society particularly SCs, STs, and women. It strengthened the rural infrastructure; revitalize the local governing institutions like Panchayat by giving them space in the planning, implementation and monitoring of the programme. Moreover, the programme had strengthened the bargaining power of the unorganized workers. Despite the positive impact of the programme in the rural areas it also had uneven record of implementation and wide spread irregularities were found. The Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) found that (it reported the implementation of the programme from 2007-2012) the monitoring of the programme by the Centre was not satisfactory. According to its reports, only 30 per cent of 129 lakh works worth over Rs 126,000 crores approved in 14 states was completed, 95 lakh cases of wrong wage calculations found in 18 States, 1.1 lakh cases of wrong bill amounts for the purchased materials under the scheme were found, 14,764 duplicate job cards found in Ranchi district of Jharkhand alone, 37229 workers not paid unemployment allowance in two districts of Assam, 2016 ghost workers

found in two Panchayat of Assam(workers who exist only on paper), in many States like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana had not maintained work inspection records, 18 to 54 percent of the Gram Panchayat checked showed irregular *NREGA* records.⁵⁰

The *MGNREGA* had ensured the liveli-hood security to the poor rural households but the farm suicides of the farmers during the UPA-I government continued, and in order to supplement the rational of the *MGNREGA*, the *Loan Wavier scheme* was announced by the UPA-I government. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh acknowledged that besides liveli-hood problem the acute distress of the farmers is due to the burden of heavy debts.⁵¹ The UPA-I government in 2008 budget announced the relief package of 60,000 crores to indebted farmers. It was the UPA-I government biggest election soap and it had in fact impacted the rural electorate in particular during the 2009 Lok Sabha election. The wavier loans was supposed to benefit 3.50 crores small and marginal farmers. However, an audit was conducted by CAG from April 2011 to March 2012 which covered 25 states. Accounts of 90,576 farmers were audited' in 715 branches of banks, in 92 districts. The CAG made shocking revelations like, 13.46 percent accounts were of those farmers, who were eligible but declared disqualified by the lending institutions, 6 percent of the checked accounts did not get their rightful benefits, 8.62 percent accounts checked were not eligible but still got either complete waiver of debt relief, more than 34 percent farmers were not issued debt waiver certificates, thereby declared them ineligible for future loans.⁵²

The pro-poor tilt of the UPA-I government paid large electoral dividends to it in general and Congress Party in particular during the 2009 Lok Sabha election. The UPA-I government in order to reap benefits of the *NREGA* renamed it as *MGNREGA*, to stop the states from claiming the scheme as their own.⁵³ It largely resurrected the credentials of the Congress as pro-poor Party. A study conducted by the Centre for the Study of Developing societies (National Election Study) confirmed that the beneficiaries of the schemes were more likely than non-beneficiaries to vote for the Congress. The pro-poor policies, such as *MGNREGA* and *Loan Wavier scheme* gave the Congress a significant electoral advantage, particularly vis-a- vis the BJP.⁵⁴ But the study did not specify how many seats the Congress and its allies got because of the various poverty initiatives, however, Yogendar Yadav says, "In a close race, advantage of three percent among voters in lower and poor categories can be a

decisive factor in increasing the proportion of seats and same happened as the Congress and its allies increased its seats in 2009 Lok Sabha elections".⁵⁵ The demand of Congress General Secretary Rahul Gandhi, to extend the scheme for the whole rural districts proved to be game changer because it created a good feeling overall and persuaded the rural voters that the UPA-I government is committed to its promise of providing them the viable livelihood.⁵⁶

Reservation for the OBCs in Higher Education

The reservation system as an affirmative policy in Indian context was initiated to address the long established social inequalities and social exclusion. Initially, when the Constitution was in making reservation was limited to a limited section of Indian society. The Constituent Assembly evolved consensus on granting reservation to SCs and STs only because these groups in the past had been subjected to extreme discrimination and exclusion, and the members of the Constituent Assembly agreed that only through instrument of reservation their social advancement can be possible. On the contrary there was no unanimous consensus on granting reservation to the OBCs. However, in the Constitution an Article was incorporated i.e. Article 340, under which state was empowered to set up a commission to investigate the condition of socially and educationally backward classes'. It was in this context that first Backward Classes Commission was set up in 1953 under the chairmanship of Kaka Kalelkar to investigate the possibility of giving reservation to the OBCs. The Commission after a hard-work submitted its report in 1955 and recommended reservation for the Backward Classes in the government services. It recommended 25 percent reservation for the Backward Classes in Class I posts, 33.2 percent in the Class II posts, and 40 percent in Class III and IV posts. Moreover, it also recommended reserving 70 percent seats in all technical and professional institutions for the qualified students from Backward Classes.⁵⁷ Despite this the report was full with dissent voices of the majority of members on different grounds and was even strongly opposed by its Chairman, Kaka Kalelkar, who expressed the fear that its implementation would encourage casteist tension.⁵⁸ Furthermore, the Ministry of Home Affairs vehemently criticised the Commission's selection of criteria and conclusion.⁵⁹ The Central government argued that Commission had given too much importance to caste compared to the other socio- economic indicators and this will

perpetuate the social division and the reservation will hinder the efficiency in the administration. Thus the Central government did not proceed further on the report however; the Central government allowed the state government to go ahead to develop their own list of the Backward Classes' and fix their own quotas for the reservation, still it expressed a preference for reservations on economic status rather than caste.⁶⁰ But most of the states in determining the backwardness gave emphasis to caste criteria. Christopher Jafferlot remarks:

The argument of merit – and its corollary, that of efficiency that flows from competence – reflected the aspirations of independent India's leaders, but also the dread of the upper castes (to which these leaders all belonged) of seeing the OBCs gain more jobs in the civil service, considered by the educated elites as their private reserve.⁶¹

No doubt, the Kaka Kalelkar report was rejected by the Central government, but allowing the state government to go ahead with their schemes and methods to address concerns of the OBCs was the major breakthrough which strengthened OBCs cause at central level. By allowing reservation to the OBCs at state level by giving emphasis to caste criteria set in motion a process of mobilisation by the Backward Classes for recognition of caste as criteria for backwardness at the central level. More, importantly the demand of Backward Classes to give primacy to caste over the economic criteria for the reservation at the central level got political support of the Socialist Party of India which devoted itself for this end, and in this context passed a resolution in 1959 favouring reservation of 60 percent in civil service jobs for the OBCs. The Socialists Party could not promote the idea as long as the Congress Party was in power at the Centre, but once it assumed the power at the Centre in 1977 through Janta Party, they took initiative to extend reservation to the OBCs.⁶² In this context the Janta government constituted Second Backward Classes Commission under the Chairmanship of B.P Mandal in 1978 and the Commission submitted its report in 1983 during the Congress's rule. The Commission identified 3743 caste groups as the OBCs which comprised 52 percent of the population, and recommended that 27 percent reservation for the OBCs in public services and scientific, technical and professional institutions run by the Central and State governments.⁶³ The Commission's report was vehemently criticised on the ground that it gave more

importance to caste criteria than to other socio-economic criterias adopted in defining backwardness. Zoya Hassan said:

The Mandal Commission, fully embraced caste as defining criteria for backwardness. Its report marked a watershed in redefining the official discourse, which had from the time of Kalelkar's dissent note sought to emphasize economic backwardness as important factor for decision with regard to social and educational backwardness. Disregarding the Kalelker Commission's approach, the Mandal Commission chartered its approach on the lines adopted by State Commissions which had defined backwardness in caste terms rather than socio-economic terms.⁶⁴

The Congress Party under Indira Gandhi and then under Rajiv Gandhi did not take any initiative to implement the report due to its own political compulsions.

Implementation of Mandal Commission Recommendations in Government Jobs (Mandal-I)

No doubt, reservation for the OBCs was delayed for a long time but it never died and thanks to electoral competition it again cropped in 1989 election when it featured in Janta Dal's election manifesto. The 1989 Lok Sabha election witnessed defeat of the Congress Party and formation of National Front government.⁶⁵ National Front being a coalition government witnessed from the very beginning personal clashes between Deputy Prime Minister Devi Lal and Prime Minister V.P. Singh. The internal fighting within the Janta Dal reached to its climax when V.P. Singh expelled Devi Lal from Union Cabinet and the latter decided to organise the peasants rally to show the former its strength. To counter the Devi Lal's threat V.P. Singh decided to implement the recommendations of Mandal Commission, to grant 27 percent reservation to the OBCs in the government jobs. The decision to implement Mandal Commission's recommendations pitted the caste against the caste in the name of social justice. The sudden decision of V.P. Singh to implement the recommendations put the national political parties particularly the Congress, the BJP and the Left Parties in dilemma, neither had they openly supported it nor did they oppose it. They took the middle path supporting the reservation with certain modification to the policy particularly stressed the importance of the economic factor in reservations. The government implemented the decision of giving 27 percent reservation to OBCs in Central government jobs and it was done through executive order. However, its

implementation was challenged in the in the Supreme Court in *Indra Sawhney v Union of India case*, and the Supreme Court in a majority decision uphold the 27 percent reservation for the OBCs subjected to the exclusion of *creamy layer* from the notified backward classes'. Moreover, the Apex Court rejected the quota proposal for the economically backward people.⁶⁶ Zoya Hassan remarks:

By validating caste as criteria by which to identify OBCs, the courts verdict In the *Indra Sawhney v. Union of India case* put an end to thirty years of jurisprudence founded on the *Balaji v. the State of Mysore case* decision, Silencing critics who said that caste could not be the basis of for reservation.⁶⁷

Implementation of Mandal Commission's recommendation Related to Higher Education (Mandal II)

The Mandal Commission's recommendations were partially implemented and the successive governments avoided the issue to extend reservation for the OBCs in Central Educational Institutions. It was in 2004 that UPA-I government in NCMP mentioned it though indirectly. On reservation in higher education to OBCs, the text of NCMP reads as, "to provide for full equality of opportunity, particularly in education and employment for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, OBCs and religious minorities". Owing to the constant political lobbying by the OBC groups and United Progressive Alliance's own political calculations in general and Congress's in particular of regaining backward class constituencies, the issue of reservation in higher education institutions was taken up in the Lok Sabha in the form of 93rd Constitution Amendment Act.⁶⁸ The Act extended reservation of 27 percent of seats in elite educational institutions such as Indian Institute of Technologies and Indian Institute of Management for the OBCs. The 93rd Amendment to the Constitution came in response to the Supreme Court's judgement in *P. A. Inamdar v. State of Maharashtra* case in which the Supreme Court declared reservation in private unaided, educational institutions as unconstitutional. This judgement was followed by a strong demand from the political class for a suitable amendment to the Constitution and a legislation in order to protect reservation for the SCs, STs, and Backward Classes' in the education institutions.⁶⁹ The 93rd Amendment to the Constitution was important as it enabled the government to introduce the Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Admission) Bill, 2006. The Bill covers Central universities,

institutions of national importance set by Parliament and institutions directly or indirectly aided by the Central government or linked to the Central universities or centrally created. It excluded the private unaided institutions and Minority educational institutions.⁷⁰ However, this move resulted in an organised agitation which was led by legal luminaries and open groups like *Youth for the Equality*. It was joined by the students from the All India institute from Medical science, students from the premier medical colleges and from the IITs and IIMs. This agitation was also supported by the Industrialists, trader chambers, professional associations, certain intellectual and academicians. These groups believed in the merit theory and held that the caste based hiring will kill efficiency and weaken the competitiveness and further argued, that caste based reservation doesn't work in the today's knowledge economy.⁷¹ On the other hand the protagonists of reservation refuted the argument put forward by the merit theorists and held that upper castes are not born with merit and intelligence. There is nothing like gene theory to support the inborn intelligence argument of upper castes. The educational backwardness of the OBCs is mainly because of their social and economic conditions. The poor schooling, economic conditions and the social surrounding in which they grow up don't promote adequate educational capability to compete with the better-educated children of the upper castes.⁷² Moreover, the National Knowledge Commission vehemently criticised the government's policy of granting OBCs reservation in higher educations. The real embarrassment for the government was that when two members of the National Knowledge Commission, Pratap Bahnu Mehta and Andre Beteille resigned from their posts, and protested against the quotas in Central Educational Institutions. Pratap Bahnu Mehta said, "Every student must be enabled to realise their full potential regardless of financial or social circumstances. Achieving this aim requires radical forms of affirmative action. But the numerically mandated quotas that government is proposing are deeply disappointing".⁷³

As mentioned above the Congress Party during Indira Gandhi's era and then during Rajiv Gandhi's era had remained indifferent towards the OBC reservation which resulted in cultivating distrust in the backward castes towards the Congress Party. The backward castes view the Congress Party as the upper caste friendly and turned away from it since 1989 Lok Sabha election. The Congress Party in order to remove this distrust played the quota gamble to wean away the OBCs from the

regional and state based political parties which over the years had garnered the OBC support. However, the Congress top leadership did not support it openly because they were aware that such a move if supported openly will result in alienation of the upper castes. It could also hardly afford to disown the reservation issue on the other hand.⁷⁴ Therefore, the Congress Party which was leading the UPA-I government set up an *Oversight Committee* to suggest ways to accommodate the OBCs students without harming the interests of the general category students. The Committee submitted its report which was more balancing; it assured the agitating students that the OBC quota in the education institutions would not eat into the number of seats available for the general categories. It was assured that the number of seats in the higher educational institutions would be increased so that OBC quota would be accommodated without affecting the others. The report had taken into consideration Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's concern who said to his colleagues, "not to do anything that will destroy the country's knowledge strength". The final decision take related to the OBC reservation were as following.⁷⁵

- a) There should be no dilution in the existing seats and opportunities available in the 'non reserved categories'.
- b) The extension of the 27 percent reservation for the OBCs should be staggered to ensure that the requisite infrastructure was in place, and
- c) Certain institutions of national/strategic importance were kept out of the reservation regime.

From the above it was clear that Congress Party struck a right balance between competing demands of the OBCs and the upper castes. However, this strategy did not satisfy the agitating students. Despite this the Lok Sabha unanimously passed Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Admission) Bill, 2006 on 14th December 2006 and it received the assent of the President on, 3rd January 2007. The Act cleared the way for the reservation in admission to the SCs, STs and Other Backward Classes of citizens, to certain Central Educational Institutions which were set up, maintained or aided by the Central Government. However, the provisions of the Act could not apply to Central Institutions established in the tribal areas referred in the Sixth Scheduled to the Constitution, institutions of excellence, research institutions, institutions of national and strategic importance specified in the scheduled of the Act

and finally the Minority Educational Institutions.⁷⁶ The bill was supported by the entire political class and only the BJP opposed the provision on exclusion of Minority Educational Institutions.

The UPA-I government could not implement the Act as the Supreme Court stayed it by an interim order when the petitioners in the Ashoka Thakur v. Union of India challenged the Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Admission) Act, 2006 on the ground that the Act and the 93rd Constitution Amendment Act violated their fundamental right to equality.⁷⁷ It was on April 10, 2008 that a five-judge Constitution bench headed by Chief Justice K.G Balakrishnan, ruled that the Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Admission) Act, 2006 doesn't violate the basic structure of the Constitution, thereby, paving the way for its implementation. The bench also ruled that the 93rd Constitution Amendment Act 2005, which enabled the state to provide 27 percent reservation in aided institutions didn't violate the basic structure of the Constitution.⁷⁸ The judgement was the victory for the UPA-I government, however, the real embrassement for the government was that when it was directed by the Apex Court to issue notification excluding *creamy layer* from the OBC beneficiaries'. *The Oversight Committee* also draws the attention of the government before the Apex Court's ruling on exclusion of *creamy layer*. But the UPA-I government couldn't evolve consensus on the issue as some of its constituents particularly RJD, DMK and PMK opposed the proposal of excluding *creamy layer* from the reservation benefits. The Supreme Court's decision was interpreted by the political parties in different ways. Lalu Prasad of RJD argued that the implementation of the Supreme Court's suggestions could defeat the very purpose of OBC reservation. Sharad Yadav, leader of Janta Dal argued that excluding the so-called *creamy layer* was unwarranted because reservation was meant to address social and educational backwardness, not economic backwardness.⁷⁹ R. Nallakannu, leader of CPI said that *creamy layer* concept was only a ploy to deprive the backward communities.⁸⁰ CPI (M) welcomed the decision because the party had consistently argued for the exclusion of *creamy layer* from the reservation benefits. In short, the supporters of reservation argued that the move to exclude *creamy layer* from the reservation benefits will defeat the very purpose of the bill, because the opportunities of higher education are only availed by *creamy*

layer in every group. By disqualifying those most likely to succeed in elite institutions, will defeat the very purpose of the proposed law.⁸¹

The Supreme Court's decision was welcome step because it ensured that the benefits of the reservation will be availed by the least advantaged in the OBCs because it was the privileged groups which had benefited from the reservation system mostly. The same was corroborated by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice in its eighth report on the SCs, STs and Other Backward Classes' (Reservation in post and services) Bill, 2004. The Committee pointed out that many castes, races and tribes among the SCs, STs and OBCs had been deprived from the benefits of reservation in services or jobs and only creamy layer had benefited from it.⁸² A number of academicians and analysts saw the judgement as cautious and conservative and held that the Apex Court missed another opportunity to settle the quota controversy. Moreover, they held that the judgement of the Apex Court nearly confirms to the Mandal I (Indra Sawhney vs. Union of India). They further, argued that the judgement had once again repeated the importance of caste in determining the backwardness and once again ruled to exclude the creamy layer from the reservation benefits.⁸³ Therefore, we can say that the Apex Court in Ashok Kumar Thakur v. Union of India (Mandal II) case repeated the Judgement which the Apex Court had given in the Indra Sawhney vs. Union of India case in 1993 (Mandal I).

Conclusion

Political parties enter into coalition governments with three principle interests: to win office for their members, influence policy agendas that serve their constituencies or secure votes in order to achieve the preceding two objectives.⁸⁴ The UPA-I government was led by the Congress Party which was once a dominant party in the Indian electoral process. But with the passage of time the Congress Party lost its hegemony and most of its social constituency turned away from it and this became more rapid since 1989. After 2004 Lok Sabha elections through coalition government the Congress Party got a chance to check its decline by

initiating such programmes which satisfy it's once core social support base. The policies on Minority Development, Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and the Reservation for OBCs in Higher Education were targeted for the same purpose. These policies reflected the Congress's effort to focus programmes on lower sections of the society in order to regain the support of these sections which were once the Congress's principal constituency.

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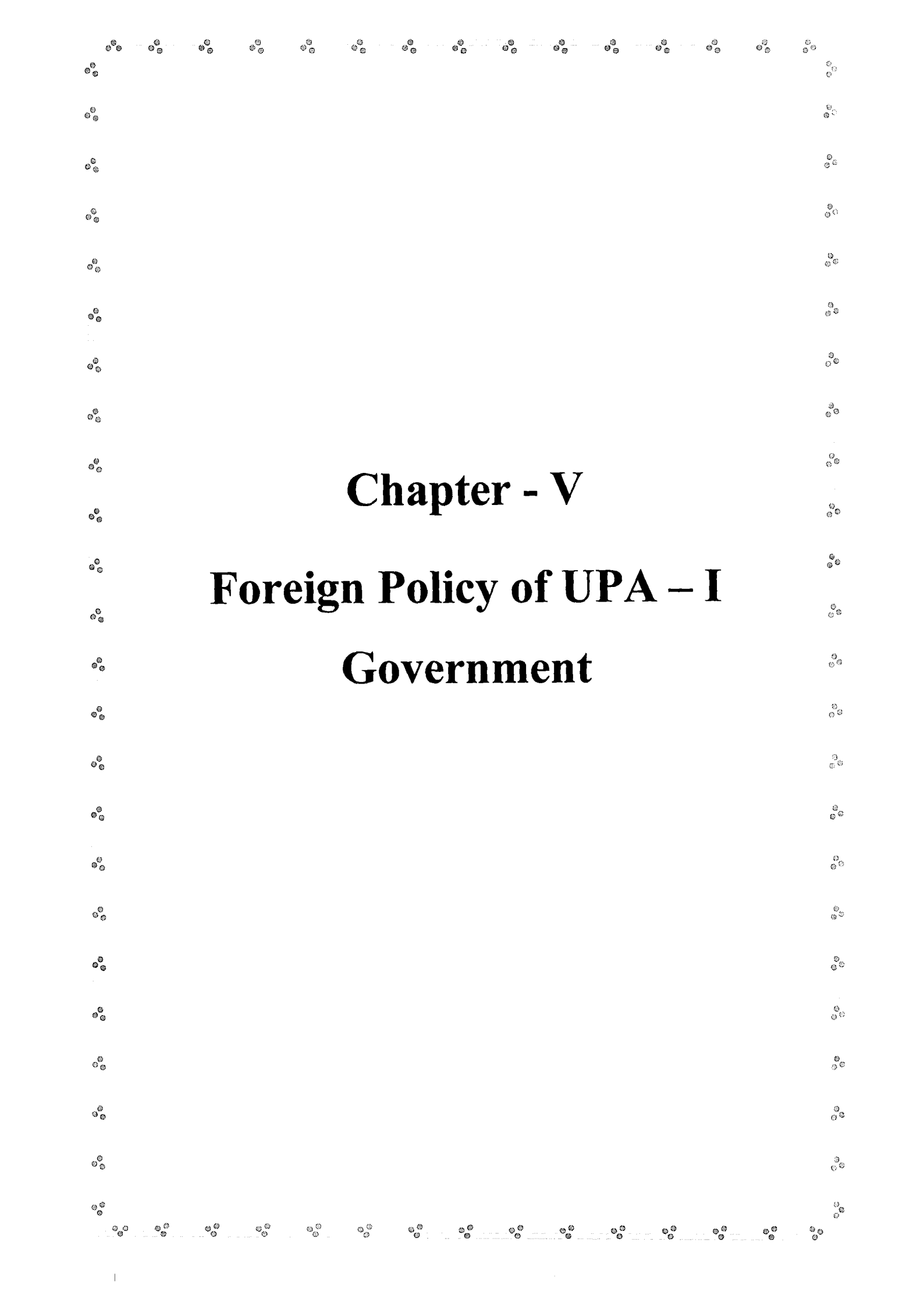
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Chapter - V

Foreign Policy of UPA – I

Government

After India's independence, Indian foreign policy was structured in an environment of racialism, imperialism, bipolar world and wide spread proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The leaders of Indian Republic particularly Jawaharlal Nehru, adopted a policy of anti-imperialism, anti-racism, non-alignment, and eloquently supported the cause of non proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Therefore, India adopted a foreign policy, defined by Nehru as Non-aligned was based on the five principles of Panchsheel i.e. mutual respect for other nation's territorial integrity and sovereignty, non aggression, non-interference in internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence.¹

With the breakdown of USSR and collapse of its economic system, and emergence of unipolar world dominated by US in 1990 brought drastic changes in the inter-state relations and compelled the states to redefine their foreign policy according to the new environment. India's foreign policy in 1990 was beset with both internal and external problems. Internally, India entered into an era of unstable coalition government, and its economy was in the state of crisis. Externally due to break down of USSR put India on the back foot because it lost its external source of strength to its foreign policy. Both factors resulted in sacrifice of the non-alignment ideology which India adhered during the cold war era. Therefore, after the collapse of USSR—one of India's largest trading partner and primary security partner—it (India) began to reassess its priorities, and opportunities emerged for greater cooperation with USA.² Therefore, India reformed its foreign policy and put economy in the centre stage of its foreign policy. The geo-economic concerns had taken precedence over the geo-strategic and geo-political concerns of the state. Though India had opened its market for the external capitals but its internal security concern due to China- Pakistan axis, and playing a role in the world politics remained intact. The foreign policy of India witnessed fundamental shift in the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) coalition government and the foreign policy became more assertive due to good state of Indian economy. During the NDA era the foreign policy of India became more realistic and distanced itself from the Non-alignment principle set by the Nehru. But in 2004 Lok Sabha elections NDA lost power and Congress formed the coalition government. The UPA-I government laid down the National Common Minimum Programme (NCMP) in which various issues related to foreign policy were discussed. The NCMP was

formulated after discussion with the coalition partners even before the formation of the coalition government. The main objective was to evolve consensus on different critical issues pertinent to foreign policy. The NCMP set forth the foreign policy priorities of the new government. Some of the highlights of NCMP related to foreign policy of the UPA-I government were as following:³

- (a) The government would pursue an independent foreign policy keeping in view its traditional ethos and strive for the multi-polarity and oppose the unilateralism.
- (b) The government would give priority in building closer political, economic and other ties with South Asian neighbours and to strengthen the SAARC. Particular emphasis will be paid to regional projects in areas of water, power, and ecology conservation.
- (c) The government would pursue dialogue with Pakistan and emphasises to engage with it in systematic and in a sustained way. It would also engage with China by expanding trade, investment, and for the settlement of the border issues talks would be pursued seriously
- (d) The government would also support the peace talks in the Sri-Lanka that fulfil the legitimate aspirations of Tamils and religious minorities.
- (e) The government would engage with Bangladesh to resolve issues and talks with Nepal on water issue would be initiated.
- (f) The government would intensify relations with East Asia.
- (g) The government would inculcate fresh trust in its relation with West Asia and continue to support the creation of Palestine homeland.
- (h) The government would pursue closer relation and engagement with USA, but maintains India's independence on regional and global issues, and deepen its ties with Russia and Europe.
- (i) The government would protect the Indian interests, in respect of farmers, industry and intellectual property, and also protect the interests of the developing countries in the world institutions like WTO.

The foreign policy priorities set in the NCMP became the framework for the new government and which the new government pledged to uphold while conducting its foreign relations. In practice the new government gave more emphasis on relations with USA, Pakistan and China. It would be difficult to deal with whole foreign policy

of the UPA-I government. Therefore, the focus of this chapter will be to examine UPA-I government's relation with the USA, China and Pakistan.

India's relation with the USA during UPA-I

The Indo-US strategic partnership had its roots in the rapprochement policy adopted by NDA government after conducting nuclear test at Pokhran in Rajasthan in 1998. Stephen Cohen and C. Raj Mohan argued, that the testing of nuclear weapons proved blessing in disguise for India because it resulted in taking India seriously by the United States.⁴ The geo-strategic and geo-economic importance of India was very much in tune with the national interests of United States. The nuclear test gave new orientation to Indo-US relations and gave pace to build strategic dialogue between the two nations. The formal round of dialogue between then External Affairs Minister of India Jaswant Singh and then US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbot, after the nuclear tests resulted in resolving the bilateral differences over India's nuclear weapon programme and build up the means to manage those differences that could not be resolved.⁵ Besides the differences over non-proliferation, the attitude of US towards the Kashmir dispute was also major irritant between the two nations. But the Kargil conflict and the role played by the US in diffusing the tension and its tilt towards India resulted in building the new trust. The relations between the two nations got further impetus when President Clinton visited India in 2000. Both Bill Clinton and A.B. Vajpayee agreed to institutionalise the dialogue process so as to pursue new relationships. During his visit both sides agreed that the relationship between the two nations could be important factor in shaping international peace, prosperity and democratic freedom, and for ensuring strategic stability in Asia and beyond.⁶ The relations between the nations got further strengthened during the George W. Bush era. The President George W. Bush paid more attention in building partnership in South Asia and enlarging the trade and investment ties with India. What bring both the nations close to each other was the convergence of interests like countering the Terrorism, managing nuclear proliferation and containing the China.⁷ But most significantly the 9/11 attack brought both nations close to each other on the issue of terrorism and India offered its full support to US against war on terror. All this culminated in signing the *Next step in Strategic Partnership (NSSP)* under which both

nations decided to expand cooperation in the fields of civil nuclear technology, space exploration, missile defence and high technology trade.

The change in government in New Delhi in 2004 did not result in any fundamental change in the approach towards United States. The UPA-I government in the NCMP had in fact pledged to work for the closer relation and engagement with the US. For the first time Indian Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh met US President George W. Bush on the side lines of UN General Assembly meeting in September 2004. Both leaders praised the implementation of phase-I of the *NSSP* and termed this as beginning of new era of cooperation and trust between the two nations. Both leaders shared their global concern and threat to world peace due to terrorism and proliferation of Weapon of Mass Destruction and recognised the importance to work together on these issues. The major friction in relation between the two countries came when India for its growing energy requirements proposed the Iran, Pakistan, India gas pipe line project so as to cater its energy requirements. The United States was not happy with this decision and same got reflected when US ambassador to India David Malford, showed his dissent on the proposed gas pipeline on second week of March, 2005.⁸ The major shift in relations between the two countries took place when the US secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, visited India on March 2005. She reiterated the earlier stand of the US on the proposed Iran, Pakistan, and India gas pipe line and offered a “broader energy dialogue” with India so as to cater the energy demand of Indian economy.⁹ Therefore, the visit of Condoleezza Rice’s was the first step to enlarge the scope of the *NSSP* which also included the civil nuclear cooperation. The process to boost the strategic partnership between the United States and India got further impetus when Indian Defence Minister Pranab Mukerjee, inked an agreement titled as, *New Framework for US- India Defence Relationship* for ten years on June 28, 2005. Both sides also agreed to constitute a new Defence Procurement and Defence Production Group under the US-India Policy Group. Some of the highlights of the new defence deal were as following:¹⁰

- (a) To carry out exchanges on defence strategy and defence transformation.
- (b) To augment the flow of intelligence information.
- (c) To intensify security consultations between the two sides.
- (d) To Inflate the defence trade between India and the US.

- (e) To raise the prospect for technology transfer, cooperation, co-production, and research and development.
- (f) To broaden the missile defence collaboration.
- (g) To carry out joint and mutual exercises and ex-changes.
- (h) To reinforce the military competence so as to ensure security and combat terrorism.
- (i) To augment the proficiency to deal with proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.
- (j) To fortify the response of the militaries of the two countries to the disaster situations.
- (k) To work together in multinational operations when it is in their common interest.

The New Defence Frame Work was important mile stone in the Indo-US relations particularly in defence field because it was based on pragmatism to deal with existing political realities and threats. It replaced the mutual distrust that had dominated the Indo-US relations and replaced it with active agenda for military cooperation.¹¹ *The New Frame work for US-India Defence Relationship*, was harshly criticised by the Left Front which was supporting the UPA-I government from outside. Prakash Karat, said "...the agreement ties India to the strategic goal of United States in the region. The primary strategic goal is to isolate china".¹² But in order to build more confidence in the bilateral relations the Indian Parliament passed the legislation related to Weapons of Mass Destruction. It was widely believed to be done under the US pressure. These developments paved the way for Indo-US civil nuclear cooperation. The major breakthrough in the relations between the two countries came when Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visited the United States in July 2005. It was on 18th July, 2005 in a joint statement both leaders affirm to work together on wide range of issues but most important among them was the nuclear energy component. According to the joint statement, Bush administrations in this respect pledged to undertake following steps so as to facilitate the civil nuclear cooperation between the two nations. Some of them were as under.¹³

- (a) It will seek agreement from the Congress to adjust US laws and policies to achieve full civil nuclear cooperation.

(b) It also pledged to work with friends and allies to adjust the international regime to enable full civil nuclear cooperation and trade with India.

(c) It will also encourage its partners to think about fuel supply to Tarapur expeditiously.

(c) It will also consider India's aspiration to participate in ITER and for this it will consult other participants in the generation of IV international forum for India's inclusion.

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh reciprocally accepted the following conditions:

(a) India will separate the civilian and military facilities and programmes in phased manner and place its civilian nuclear facilities under IAEA safeguards.

(b) India also agreed to adhere additional Protocols with respect to civilian nuclear facilities.

(c) India also agreed to continue its unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing.

(d) India also agreed to work with US for the conclusion of FMCT.

(e) India will also refrain from transfer of enrichment and reprocessing technologies to states that don't have them and will support international efforts to limit their spread.

The nuclear deal was the major breakthrough in the Indo-US relations. In the joint statement US acknowledged India as defacto nuclear state and should get the same benefits as other nuclear weapon state. This was the diplomatic victory for India because it was the first step in ending the 34 years of nuclear isolation. The Indo-US civil nuclear cooperation gave further impetus to the Indo-US strategic partnership. The strategic thinkers around the world defined the joint statement from strategic perspective and held that the US wants to counter ascend of China and for that India was the best choice. However, the major objective of US in civil nuclear cooperation was to get the economic benefit from the deal and same was ascertained by Condoleezza Rice, in her statement before the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee where she said:

The deal will allow US to participate in the India's nuclear market and will made American nuclear industry globally competitive, thereby benefit our domestic nuclear sector. The deal will permit US companies to enter the profitable and upward Indian markets.¹⁴

The major criticism to the Indo-US nuclear cooperation came from the proponents of non-proliferation in US who were called *Ayatollahs of Non-proliferation*. The Non-proliferation proponents condemn the Indo-US nuclear cooperation on the ground that it will compromise the US commitment to global nuclear Non-proliferation and will give green signal to the states which were engaging in the nuclear weapon building.¹⁵

During the NDA era the discourse on strategic autonomy was the major concern of the Indian foreign policy establishment, which stresses on the autonomy of Indian foreign policy in decision making and the use of the strategic military assets. The first test to autonomy of Indian foreign policy came during the September and November 2005 when India voted with US against Iran at IAEA. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh defended the decision of government and said:

...that Indian stance was clear that Iran should adhere to its commitments as a signatory to the NPT. India could not afford another nuclear power in her neighbourhood and the decision was in tone with the national interests and not a gesture to US.¹⁶

This was widely believed at that time that the decision was taken with an intention to appease the US and not to imperil the announced nuclear civil energy cooperation and same was ascertained by Sham Saran in an interview to IBN news in 2009, that UPA-I government took the decision under US pressure. The UPA-I government decision to vote against Iran was, a significant move away from the past tradition of India which believed in the non-alignment and independent foreign policy.

The dramatic shift in the relation between the two countries came after India integrated its economy with the world market. The closer relations with US were favoured by the middle class professional, corporate entities, business groups. These groups saw greater benefits in closer relations between the two nations and the same was found by the Pew Research Foundation. The Foundation conducted a survey in 16 countries and found that among the 16 countries India ranked first in which 71 percent of the middle class favoured closer relations US.¹⁷ These groups had lobbied and hence influenced the policies of the Indian government. This was not only true about India; in the US the Indian lobbies like US-India Political Action Committee, US-India Friendship Council and US-India Business Council had lobbied for the Indo-US nuclear deal.¹⁸

The bilateral relations between the two nations got further impetus when the President of the USA George W. Bush visited India in the first week of March, 2006. In his address on 3rd March President Bush, pointed out that India and US were the natural partners and the partnership between them had the capacity to change the world.¹⁹ With respect to the nuclear cooperation both leaders expressed satisfaction on the successful conclusion of the discussion on India's plan to separate the civil nuclear programme from its military programme. Some of the important highlights of the Separation Plan were as following:²⁰

(a) India agreed to identify and put forward 14 of its thermal power reactors for safeguards between 2006-2014. This also included the already safeguarded reactors like TAPS 1 and 2, RAPS 1 and 2. India also agreed to place the other Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors with a capacity of 220 MWe under the safeguards.

(b) India also agreed to put in future all civilian thermal power reactors and civilian breeder reactors and reserved the right to decide such reactors as civilian.

(c) India did not agree in to place Proto type Fast Breeder Reactors and the Fast Breeder Test Reactor situated in Kalpakkam under safeguards. The government argued that the Fast Breeder Reactor Programme were at R and D stage and will take time to reach advanced stage of the development.

(d) India agreed to permanently shut down CIRUS reactor, in 2010 and also agreed to shift the fuel-core of the APSARA reactor to outside of the Bahaba Atomic Research Centre and put that under safeguards in 2010.

The separation plan also included the following assurances from the US with regard to fuel supply to India.

(a) A clause of assurances with regard to fuel supply was incorporated into the Indo-US bilateral agreement on peaceful uses of nuclear energy, which was to be submitted to the US Congress.

(b) US also agreed to assist India in negotiating India specific fuel supply agreement with IAEA.

(c) US also agreed to assist India to build up its strategic reserves of nuclear fuel.

(d) US also agreed that if the disruption of fuel supplies occur despite the above measures US and India will work with other friendly nuclear supplier groups to restore fuel supply to India.

The *Separation Plan* of the government also had to phase scathing criticism from the both opposition and the Left Front which was supporting the government from outside. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, in order to satisfy and eradicate the apprehension of the Left Front and the opposition party on the *Indo-US nuclear deal* in general and on *Separation plan* in particular addressed them in its *suo-motu* statement on March 7, 2006. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said:

...the *Separation Plan* will not restrict the strategic programme of India and there will be no inadequacy of fissile material and other inputs for the strategic programme needs... the integrity to India's nuclear doctrine and its ability to sustain Minimum Credible Nuclear deterrent is adequately protected.²¹

However, the criticism of the opposition and the Left Front to the government became more lethal when the US Congress passed the *Henry J. Hyde Act* in December 2006. The *Hyde Act* laid down certain crippling conditions on concluding the 123 agreement. Some of them were as following;²²

- (a) In case India went to nuclear test, the cooperation would be ended (of course US will consider if the test was done under exceptional circumstances).
- b) The end of cooperation would be followed by measures for getting back the equipment, the nuclear fuels, and other materials supplied by the USA,
- (c) The Act also lays the condition that the US should make sure that India did not build fuel reserves beyond its minimum requirements for its operational use,
- (d) The act also laid down the condition that US should make sure that India did not produce Plutonium even from the plants debarred from the IAEA Safeguards (inspection.) and
- (e) The act laid down that the President had to certify to the US Congress that India is acting in a way "conducive to UN interests."

The *Henry J. Hyde US-India peaceful Atomic Energy Act*, was the enabling act which permits nuclear cooperation with India. The *Act* modified the requirements of the section of 123 of the *US Atomic Energy Act 1954*. The UPA-I government from the very beginning argued that the *Act* was the internal matter of US and apply to them only and India would be only bound by the *123 Agreement*. The interpretation of the *Act* became the major issue in the whole process of Indo-US nuclear deal. The opposition party and the Left Front which was supporting the government from the outside protested that how the *Hyde Act* and other domestic laws would apply to the

123 Agreement. The Left Front argued that it will have great repercussion on India's strategic sovereignty and particularly India's independent nuclear programme. It was on August 3, 2007 in Washington that India and US formally released the text of agreement for cooperation between the two countries related to the peaceful use of the nuclear energy. But for the UPA-I government the matter became critical when it had to face sever criticism from the Left Front and the opposition parties. The matter became critical when the Condoleezza Rice issued a statement in the House of Foreign affairs Panel that "US will support nothing with India in the NSG that is in contradiction to the *Hyde Act*. It will have to be completely consistent with the obligations of the *Hyde Act*".²³ The Left Front mount pressure on UPA-I government and asked the government to renegotiate the deal. However, in October, 2007 the Left Front allowed the UPA-I government to go ahead in their talk with the IAEA on *Safeguard Agreement* but putting condition that such agreement could be accepted only after UPA-Left Panel clears it for the final agreement. The UPA-I government concluded the agreement with the IAEA and back tracked from its commitment that the results of the talks with the IAEA would be deliberated in the UPA-Left Coordination Committee. It resulted in Left Front withdrew its support to the UPA-I government. The UPA-I government completely failed to convince the Left Front that India is bound by only *123 Agreements* and not by the *Hyde Act* which was the domestic law of US. Ultimately, the UPA-I government seek vote of confidence in the Parliament which it successfully secured when Samajwadi party supported the government. The UPA-I government echoed that the vote of confidence reflected the vote for the nuclear deal. After government secured the vote of confidence it formally concluded the *123 Agreement* which became the legal frame work for the civil nuclear cooperation. The final draft of the *123 Agreement* had addressed the concerns of the Indian government. The concerns of the Indian establishment were taken into consideration related to the reprocessing of spent fuel, the right of the US to terminate the deal in case India tested the nuclear deal and US rights to getting back the equipment, the nuclear fuels, and other materials supplied by the USA, if India tested the nuclear weapon, and related to assurance for fuel supply. UPA-I government secured a commitment from US in principle to permit India to reprocess the U.S-origin spent fuel. But for that India had to establish new national reprocessing facility

under IAEA safeguards for reprocessing the US origin spent fuel and also of the other countries. Besides this both governments had to work out arrangements and procedures for the reprocessing of US spent fuel. The UPA-I government became successful in securing the commitment from the US as far as fuel assurance was concerned. Furthermore, the clause related to termination of deal in case India tested the nuclear weapon was somehow addressed. The final text did not mention the word test though the termination of the agreement could happen due to any reason but prior to that one year notice and both parties will consider the relevant circumstances and promptly hold consultations to address the reasons cited by the party seeking termination. Justine Isola said:

...the termination of agreement in the event of a test will be determined by many factors: the preferences of U.S. leaders, domestic lobbying, and geo-political balance of power consideration. This response will be constrained by the strength of the U.S-India relationship. Further, due to India's deepening nuclear ties with the rest of the world, any U.S response may have only a modest impact on India.²⁴

The UPA-I government also became successful in getting waiver from NSG which was the last step of the whole process of *Indo-US nuclear deal*.

The UPA-I government did not demonstrate any marked departure from the policies of Vajpayee government. Though the nature of UPA-I government was different from the NDA because it was supported by Left Front from outside which some scholars in the beginning believe that it could give new orientation to Indian foreign policy but they failed to predict that foreign policy of the country is determined by the national interests of country and the national interest of India, today demand closer engagement with the US. Both the nations have today converging interests related to economy, combating terrorism, concern for democracy and these interests lock together both nations. Kanti Bajpai gave the three reasons behind the UPA-I governments more emphasis in building relationship with the USA and why the nuclear deal was vital in anchoring the relationship? He said:

The first, reason was that Washington was decisive virtually in all global issues that affected India —trade, high technology, energy, climate and no other international alliance or network could have match or compensate for the US. However, to get the support of the US in these areas major hurdle was Non-proliferation. Unless New Delhi could have got a deal with the US that ended India's

nuclear isolation it would have been impossible to get US support in the above said areas. Second, reason was to contain China and Pakistan. Third, reason was nuclear programme; here the shortage of nuclear fuel for the Indian reactors was the key factor.²⁵

In the whole foreign policy of UPA-I government, *Indo-US nuclear deal* was one of the major foreign policy achievements of the UPA-I government. Though it was the one component of growing strategic partnership between the two nations but for India it was more important. Over the years the major concern for Indian foreign policy was growing energy demands. The rising oil prices and the adverse impact on the environment caused by hydro- carbon fuels had made the nuclear energy more viable source of energy. The growing demand of the energy in India had largely depleted the domestic energy resources of the country. The *Indo-US nuclear deal* has great potential for generating the energy. According to the estimate from the Planning Commission, India will produce 35000 MWS of energy by 2050 that is almost 35 percent of the country's total energy demands.²⁶ Therefore, we can say that the Indo-US Nuclear deal opened the door for the nuclear energy commerce, which was halted after the Pokhran test in 1974, between the two countries. However, it cannot be denied that the civil nuclear energy between the two sides had other dimensions too but major concern for India was the long term energy security.

Indo-China relations during UPA-I Government

The Congress led UPA-I government in its NCMP affirmed to strengthen the relationship with China, which had improved considerable during National Democratic Alliance era. The UPA-I government's approach towards China demonstrates similar pattern that was followed by the NDA after the Pokhran test. The UPA-I government did not depart from the policies pursued by Vajpayee and made their China policies as basis for new relations. It was on the sidelines of the 10th ASEAN summit in Vientiane, Laos, in November, 2004 that Indian Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh met Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao. Both leaders showed the eagerness to promote further strength to the India – China relations which had largely improved during the NDA regime. The two leaders highlighted the importance of further increasing the economic and trade relations between the two nations.²⁷ The

momentum of bilateral relations got further pace when Chief of Army Staff from India visited China in December, 2004. The visit of Chief of Army Staff was the one component of Confidence Building Measure and it resulted in strengthening the military to military contact between the two nations. The bilateral relationship between the two nation's got further impetus when the Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, visited India on April 2005. After an extensive interaction with the Indian Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, a joint statement was released in which it was agreed that the relationship between the two nations will be elevated to a Strategic, Cooperative Partnership for the Peace and Security.²⁸ The Joint statement also stated to further strengthen the economic cooperation, establishment of joint task force which will suggest ways to increase the bilateral trade between the two nations. The two major developments took place during the visit of the Wen Jiabao. Firstly, China recognized Sikkim as part of India and thus Sikkim ceased to be a conflicting issue between the two nations. Secondly, it was agreed that border issues will not be allowed to affect the overall development of bilateral relations which was on a path of growing bilateral trust. It was in this context that an agreement was inked down on the *Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for the Settlement of Indo- China Boundary Question*.²⁹ With the growing trust in the relationship both the leaders also jointly declared the year 2006 as the 'Year of China-India Friendship'.

Both nations have converging interests, particularly in maintaining regional stability, fighting terrorism, taking advantages from globalization and maintaining access to capital and markets, taking joint stands on climate change, issue of proliferation of nuclear weapons, etc. Furthermore, mutual cooperation between India and China will be more effective in balancing U.S. influence in the region and also increase their negotiating position with the sole super power. Therefore, India was engaged in maintaining closer relations with China because China was emerging as a strong economic power in the world and India was on the same path and cannot afford to have an estranged relationship with China. The strategic partnership that was growing between India and the US did not affect much the relations between India and China. The strategic thinkers who saw the Indo-US strategic relation to counter the China's influence in the Asian subcontinent proved to be wrong. India gave the strong message to the world and particularly to the US that it will not be the US ally

to counter China rather its foreign policy will be guided by its national interest. India Navy and Chinese Navy hold joint Navy exercises in 2006, soon after India, US, Japan naval exercises that were held in the Pacific Ocean, which demonstrated the India's engagement with the all major powers.³⁰ The process to strengthen the relationship between the two nations particularly in defence field got further impetus when defence Minister Pranab Mukerjee, visited China on May, 2006. During his visit, the two sides inked down a *Memorandum of Understanding on Defence Cooperation*, which established mechanism to institutionalize, regular interactions between the leaders of defense ministries and the armed forces and furthermore, to develop an annual calendar for regular military exercises and training programmes.³¹ The Indo-China relations were growing despite the Indo-US strategic partnership and China, India competition in the South Asia.

The bilateral relations between the nations got further strength when the China's President Hu. Jintao visited India in November, 2006. During his visit both sides affirm the commitment to sustain the ongoing positive and comprehensive development of India- China relations. He also reviewed along with the leadership of India the development in bilateral relation and deliberated with the Indian leadership on regional and international issues of mutual importance. It was in this context that Indian Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh and Chinese President Hu Jintao, in a joint statement announced the following *Ten Point Strategy*³² so as to give further strength to the bilateral relations.

- (a) Ensuring Comprehensive Development of Bilateral Relations.
- (b) Strengthening Institutional Linkages and Dialogue Mechanism. .
- (c) Consolidating Commercial and Economic Exchanges.
- (d) Expanding All -Round Mutually Beneficially Cooperation.
- (e) Instilling Mutual Trust and Confidence through Defense Cooperation.
- (f) Seeking early settlement of Outstanding Issues.
- (g) Promoting Trans- border Connectivity and Cooperation.
- (h) Boosting Cooperation in Science and Technology.
- (i) Revitalizing Cultural Ties and Nurturing People to People Exchanges.
- (j) Expanding Cooperation on Regional and International Stage.

The most important development during the visit of Hu. Jintao was that China recognized the importance of civil nuclear energy for the Indian economy and

hence saw the Indo-US nuclear deal through economic context. Both sides agreed to cooperate in civilian nuclear technology, consistent with their respective international commitments.³³ The major irritant in the relations between the two countries was China's close relationship with Pakistan, including the transfer of nuclear and missile technology. President Hu. Jintao also tried to alleviate these concerns by welcoming the peace process between India and Pakistan, and argued that China had no selfish gains in the South Asia and sincerely wished the peace in the region and would constructively help the process.³⁴ Both sides also agreed to continue forward the negotiations on border issues. In order to resolve the border issues through negotiations, the ninth round of talks between the Special Representatives was held in New Delhi from January 16-18, 2007.³⁵ The two Special Representatives continued their discussion on a framework for the boundary settlement on the basis of the *Agreement on Political Parameters and Guiding Principles*.³⁶ Both sides agreed to maintain peace and tranquillity in the border areas in accordance with the agreement of 1993, 1996 and 2005 till border issues were not solved amicably.

In order to promote people to people contact and to make the citizens of the two nations acquainted to each other's cultural heritage so as to promote good will. Both sides agreed to celebrate 2007 as, *India-China Year of Friendship through Tourism-2007*. China's Foreign Minister Mr. Li Zhao Xing visited India on February, 2007 to participate in the inauguration of the *India-China Year of Friendship through Tourism-2007*. The Chinese Foreign Minister, Li Zhao Xing, said:

... both the countries were "true friends, cooperative partners committed to long-term friendship, productive cooperation and common development...both China and India enjoy splendid culture and rich tourism resources, and there is a sound basis and great potential for enhancing our cooperation in tourism and other cultural fields."³⁷

Furthermore, Li Zhao Xing, with Pranab Mukerjee held discussion on bilateral relations, regional issues and international issues. More importantly, the China's Foreign Minister tried to alleviate the Indian concern on China's testing of Anti-Satellite Test, by conveying to Pranab Mukerjee that the test was not directed against any country.³⁸ Despite these confidence building measures the border issues continued to be the major irritants in the relationship of the two nations. China's claim

for Aurnachal Pradesh got again manifested in 2007, when China refused to grant visa to an Indian official who reside in the Aurnachal Pradesh. China claimed that he was already citizen of China and there is no need grant him visa.³⁹ Furthermore, there was also some small incursion in Aurnachal Pradesh and Sikkim areas. But more importantly theses incidences were not allowed to go too far and later through mechanism of annual defence dialogue held in Beijing on November 12-13, 2007, the matter were deliberated.⁴⁰

In order to give further boost to the relationship between the two countries Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visited China on 13-15 January 2008. During his visit the two sides issued a joint statement entitled as *A Shared Vision for the 21st Century of the Republic of India and the People's Republic of China*.⁴¹ The document outlined common positions on a number of international and some bilateral issues. Besides this the joint statement included the wide range of issues ranging from trade, international relations, energy, and climate change and security relations. More importantly, the two sides extensively held discussion on the trade relations and both sides jointly set a bilateral trade target of US\$ 100 billion for 2015. But soon after returning from its China's visit, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh paid a visit to Aurnachal Pradesh which was largely criticized by the China. In a strong reply to China Pranab Mukerjee eloquently speak in the Lok Sabah on February 20, 2008 that Aurnachal Pradesh is an integral part of India and the fact was conveyed to the Chinese government.⁴² The matter again came into reflection when China opposed the use of Asian Development Bank loan by India for the projects in the Aurnachal Pradesh. Despite these irritants in the bilateral relations, both sides continued the cooperation in other areas. In December 2008, China, and India jointly conducted a counter terrorism exercise named that as, *Hand-in-Hand, 2008* ⁴³ so as to boost the ties between the armed forces of the two nations.

Therefore, we can say that during UPA-I the relationship between the two nations improved considerably. Both nations extended economic ties, military to military contact, people to people contact but it couldn't achieve anything substantial. The border issues remained to be solved despite the several round of talks between the Special Representatives and it will remain the major irritant in the relations in future

also. The UPA-I government tried to construct relations with China on other areas and not gave too much emphasis on the border issues. Since boundary issue is one of the major irritant in the growing relations between the two nations, it needed to be settled as soon as possible because unless and until this issue is settled the distrust in relations will remain.

Indo-Pak relations during UPA-I Government

The Indo-Pak relations were considerably improved after the terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament due the personal efforts by the then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. The process of building new trust in the relations started when the leaders of two nations met during the SAARC summit at Islamabad on January, 2004. Both the leaders affirmed to carry forward the process of normalization and more importantly, the leaders agreed to commence the process of the Composite Dialogue. Despite the change in the government in India in May, 2004, the Indo-Pak relations did not affect too much. In fact, the UPA-I government in its NCMP stated that it will strengthen the dialogue process with Pakistan and emphasizes to engage with it in systematic and in a sustained way. The new government showed its intent to engage with Pakistan and sustain the momentum of peace process started by the NDA government. It was on June, 2004 that foreign secretary level talks on *Peace and Security, and Jammu and Kashmir* were held between the two sides. During the talks both sides affirmed to continue the momentum of the peace process and exchanged in detail views on Jammu and Kashmir and agreed to carry forward meaningful dialogue in order to amicably solve all outstanding issues.⁴⁴ Both sides also agreed to give further momentum to dialogue process and resumed the Composite Dialogue on June 2004. The Composite Dialogue covered eight fields which were agreed by the Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral and Nawaz Sharif in Male in 1997.⁴⁵ The eight areas of proposed deliberation were Jammu and Kashmir, Siachen, Wullar Barrage/Tulbul Navigation Project; Sir-Creek, Terrorism and Drug Trafficking; Economic and Commercial Cooperation; Peace and Security; and Promotion of Friendly Exchanges in various fields. It was in this context that both sides held deliberation on these areas on last week of July and first half of August 2004.⁴⁶ In order to review the overall progress of the Composite Dialogue the Foreign Ministers of the two countries met in

September 2004. Both sides agreed to initiate talks on other areas particularly, expert level meeting on Conventional and Nuclear Confidence Building Measures, meeting between the Railway authorities of the two countries, meeting between the Border Forces of the two countries, meeting between the Narcotic Authorities of the two countries, meeting between the Indian Coastal Guards and Pakistan Maritime Security Agency, and more importantly, the meeting related to all issues regarding the commencement of Srinagar and Muzafarabad bus service.⁴⁷

The bilateral relations between the two sides got further impetus when Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh met Pakistan President Parveez Musharraf in New York on the sidelines of UN General Assembly meeting in September, 2004. After meeting both released a joint statement in which both sides affirm to make every effort to restore normalcy and cooperation, in the spirit of the January 6, 2004 statement signed by former Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihar Vajpayee and President Musharraf. In the joint statement it was also agreed that Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs) of all categories under discussion between the two governments should be implemented keeping in mind practical possibilities.⁴⁸ They also addressed that the issue of Jammu and Kashmir should be addressed in peaceful environment with a sincere spirit and a purposeful manner. Despite the growing confidence in the relation the major irritant between the relations historically had been the issue of Jammu and Kashmir. The Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visit to Srinagar in November 2004, where he announced political and economic package for the people of Jammu and Kashmir created friction in the relation between the two nations. The Prime Minister eloquently, reiterates India's stand on Jammu and Kashmir and emphasized in his Srinagar speech that Jammu and Kashmir was an integral part of India. This invites the criticism from the Pakistan side. Pakistan President Parveez Musharraf in retaliation to the Manmohan Singh's statement on Jammu and Kashmir said, "... it would better for all the parties concerned if both Islamabad and New Delhi departed from their stated positions. He further said, "...If India moves halfway, we will move halfway."⁴⁹

In order to give further boost to the bilateral relations both sides also agreed to facilitate people to people contact. It was in this context that India government unilaterally liberalizes the visa for Pakistan nationals like accredited journalists with

minimum 3 years accreditation with national or international media of repute; academicians and professors like Vice Chancellors and others invited by reputed/eminant universities and institutions; medical doctors if accompanying patients for treatment at leading/reputed hospitals in India; all Pakistan nationals above the age of 65 years.⁵⁰ But more importantly, the things were not allowed to go out of hand and both sides in order to sustain the momentum and strengthen the process of Confidence Building Measures, the political level contacts were maintained. It was in this context that Indian External Affairs Minister, Mr. K. Natwar Singh visited Pakistan from 15-17 April, 2005. During his visit an agreement to start the bus services from Srinagar to Muzafarabad, Amritsar to Lahore and to religious places such as Nankan Sahib was reached.⁵¹ The peace process got further strength when both sides successfully started the bus service between the Srinagar to Muzafarabad; it was the landmark achievement in the Indo- Pak peace process. Furthermore, in order to keep momentum of friendly relationship between the two nations going on Pakistan President Parveez Musharaaf, visited India on April-16-18, 2005. During his visit a joint statement was signed in which both sides affirmed their commitment to peace process and to give further pace to CBM process. Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh conveyed to the Pakistan President that it is not possible to redrawn the boundary but both countries a can make borders irrelevant by increasing the people to people contact, and accelerating the cross border trade. This process will help to create an enviorment of trust and paved the way to solve the complex problems in future. Both the leaders described the peace process between the two countries as "irreversible, and pledged to address the issue of Jammu and Kashmir in a "sincere and purposeful and forward-looking manner for a final settlement."⁵² Both sides also reaffirmed their commitments made in the two joint statements that were released at Islamabad in January 2004 and other released at New York, on September 2004. In both the joint statements Pakistan had made commitment to stop cross border terrorism. After the visit of President Parveez Musharraaf, both sides under the frame of Composite Dialogue held deliberation on Sir Creek issue and reflected on the possible demarcation of international boundary between the two nations in the Sir Creek area. At the end of meeting both sides agreed to continue the dialogue process on the issue so as to find an early resolution of the issue which would be mutually

beneficial for the sides.⁵³ Both countries also held deliberations on Wullar Barrage/Tulbul Navigation Project on 28-29 June, 2005 in New Delhi. Both sides reconfirmed their commitment to Indus Water Treaty and agreed to continue the discussion on the subject in the next round of dialogue process so as to resolve the issue as per the provisions of the treaty.⁵⁴ A major break through with respect to military and strategic confidence building measures came when the two sides signed two agreements one on *Pre-notification of Flight Testing of Ballistic Missiles*, and *Memorandum of Understanding for Communication Link between Coastal Guards of India and Pakistan Maritime Security Agency*. Furthermore, in order to give more pace to the bilateral relations people to people contact between the two sides were strengthened by Munnabao- kokhrabar rail link, the Amritsar to Lahore bus service and the Amritsar to Nanakana Sahib bus services were started in 2006. Despite these positive breakthroughs the relations between the two sides got halted when Mumbai blasts took place in July, 2006 claiming the lives of innocent people. The investigation teams found the Pakistan's involvement in the blasts. This resulted in the suspension of foreign secretary level talks which was the usual part of the Composite Dialogue process. But more importantly; the political contacts between the two sides were not halted. It was on the sidelines of NAM Summit on September 16, 2006, that Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh met Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf. Both leaders held discussion on the Mumbai blast and announced to resume the Composite Dialogue process. Furthermore, both leaders decided to combat terrorism jointly and agreed upon to establish a Joint Counter Terrorism Institutional mechanism (JATM).⁵⁵ The first ever meeting of the JATM took place in March 2007, after the tragic event of Samjhuta Express. This meeting laid down the parameters of bilateral anti-terror cooperation.⁵⁶ Second meeting of the JATM took place on October 22, 2007, in which both sides updated the earlier shared information and more importantly, both sides affirmed to cooperate with one another to identify measures, exchange specific information and assist in the investigations.⁵⁷

A significant development took place when Pakistan softened its stand on Kashmir and put forward new proposal for resolving the Kashmir issue. President Musharraf, put forward a new set of proposals (which were called Musharaafs Four

Point Formula) which he spelt before A. G. Noorani in an interview to *Frontline* magazine in August 2006. The proposal put forward were as following.⁵⁸

- (a) Kashmir will have the same borders but people will be allowed to move freely back and forth in the region;
- (b) The region will have Self-governance or Autonomy, but not independence;
- (c) Troops will be withdrawn from the region in a staggered manner; and
- (d) A joint supervision mechanism (institutional Arrangement) will be set up, with India, Pakistan and Kashmir represented in it.

However, India reacted conservatively to this proposal and due the domestic and political turmoil in Pakistan the proposal could not get any kind of political response and was only debated in the media. India did not pay attention to this proposal and argued that if any such agreement took place in the future then for that both the countries had to prepared way for this agreement and this way can be paved by the cessation of terrorist activities in the region.

The fourth round of Composite Dialogue between the two nations was held in the back drop of domestic political turbulence in Pakistan. Both sides resolved to continue the peace process and held that the terrorist attack on Samjhuta Express will not be allowed derail the peace process. However, the political conditions in Pakistan worsened during the last quarter of 2007. It started with imposition of emergency in Pakistan, followed by the assassination of Benazir Bhutto. Despite the domestic Political turmoil in Pakistan, the dialogue process again started with the ministerial review of the fourth round of talks of the Composite Dialogue in May 2008. However, the terrorist attack on Indian Embassy in Kabul, followed by the terrorist attack in Ahmadabad, New Delhi and the more devastating Mumbai attack on 26th November, 2008 frozen all the Composite Dialogue process. The Mumbai terrorists attack brought both the nations on the brink of war and it was due to the restraints exercised by the governments of the two countries and the diplomatic maneuver by USA, UK and other major powers that war was avoided. Both sides tried to build new trust in the relationship after the Mumbai attack, and in context a joint statement was released by the two sides after the Sharm el-Sheikh meeting and the UPA-I government had to face scathing criticism from the opposition political parties and media on soft stand on terrorism and on reinitiating the trust building. But the constant terrorists provocation

from the Pakistan led the derailment of the peace process and it never return on the same path which was maintained during the UPA-I era.

Therefore, we can say that during UPA-I government the relation between the two nations had improved considerably. The government started Composite Dialogue which was the desirable approach to the resolving the complex issues like Jammu Kashmir, Siachen, Tulbul, and Sir Creek. But these talks did not achieve anything substantial because of the derailment in talks due to constant terrorist provocations from Pakistan; the domestic and political conditions in Pakistan also got worsened during the last quarter of 2008, and more importantly, the change in political leadership in Pakistan also contributed.

Conclusion

The UPA-I government's foreign policy did not show any major departure from the foreign policy pursued by its predecessor that is National Democratic Alliance (NDA). The foreign policy of the UPA-I government was based on realism and pragmatic assessment of the emerging global environment. The geo-economic dimension of the foreign policy got more importance in its approach. The new government like NDA put more emphasis on relations with the US, China and Pakistan due to the global and regional imperatives. Although UPA-I government maintained the continuity in policies pursued by the NDA but the change can also be discerned. The UPA-I government built its partnership with the US on the foundation laid down by the NDA government. Nuclear deal was the part of the strategic partnership which was evolved during the NDA regime. The UPA-I government sustained the process to strengthen the economic ties with China by increasing trade and investment and more importantly, resolving the border issues through negotiations. Furthermore, UPA-I government also continued the Composite dialogue process with Pakistan and affirmed to resolve all bilateral issues through peaceful negotiations. However, the difference in approach between the NDA and UPA-I government can be discerned also. The UPA-I gave more weight to negotiation, diplomacy and was more importantly liberal in its approach on the other hand the NDA was more aggressive and muscular in its approach.

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Chapter - VI

Conclusion

India is a country of diverse identities. This plural nature of Indian society could have been better represented only through the multi-party parliamentary democracy. The multi-party parliamentary democracy ensures the representation of all the sections of society in the political system. Therefore, the framers of the Indian Constitution gave their preference for the multi-party parliamentary form of democracy. After India's independence, multi-party system was prevalent but there was no such power struggle as is found in the multi-party parliamentary democracies. The main reason behind that was the all embracing character of the Congress Party which represented almost all the sections of the Indian society. The other political parties like Communist Party, Socialist Party, Jana Sangh couldn't play a decisive role in the political process. Therefore, the Congress Party overshadowed the importance of these parties and maintained the dominance in the electoral process at state level up to 1967 and at central level up to 1989.

The dominance of the Congress Party was first challenged at state level in 1967 when Congress lost power in the half of the Indian states to the state based parties, which united and laid down the coalition government. With the passage of time due to change in the socio-economic profile of the country new social groups emerged and looked for space in the political process. The Congress Party could not accommodate and reconcile with the new groups hence, paved the way for the emergence of new political formations (parties) which made the electoral process at the state level in the beginning, and then at central level more competitive. Therefore, the single dominant party system was replaced by the multi-party system in which no particular party claimed absolute majority and the result was that the model of intra-party coalition was replaced by the inter-party coalition system. This democratic transition from the Congress dominated multi-party politics to the multi-party system has strengthened and widened the base of representative system in India. Due to the emergence of coalition governments the plural nature of the Indian society got also reflected in the governing structure, which made the Indian political system more inclusive and encompassing.

India had experienced long periods of coalition governments both at centre and also in some states and it has become an inevitable feature of Indian politics. In contemporary political process has become competitive and lots of political parties are competing for the representation, recognition and share in power. The multi-party

coalition governments formed since 1989 in India at central level are regarded as a kind of accommodated politics with all varieties of political parties ideologically poles apart ranging from regional to national coming together in broad coalitions. The emergence of the BJP as a strong alternative to the Congress Party at national level gave new orientation to the party system in India and since 1998 party system in India at the national level had been loosely bipolar divided between the BJP led NDA and the Congress led UPA. In contemporary Indian politics one of the major developments was the ability of the BJP led NDA coalition government to complete its tenure of five years from 1999 to 2004. This experience was great blow to the critiques of coalition government who considered coalition as unstable by nature and a transitional phase in Indian politics. Taking lessons from the NDA coalition government the Congress Party also struck alliance with the regional forces in 2004 general elections and formed the government under title of United Progressive alliance. An important feature of the Congress led UPA-I government was that it was joined by many state based political parties which were historically the arch rivals of the Congress Party. Moreover, the government was supported by the CPI (M) led Left Front from outside. The constituents of UPA-I government interpreted 2004 election results as mandate for secular forces to promote and solidify the secular nature of Indian society and strengthen Indian democratic structure by inclusive development. The above quoted mandate had been given shape in the National Common Minimum Programme which acted as frame work for governance to the new coalition government. The completion of full term by the two coalition governments i.e. NDA and UPA-I had made the coalition system appear as the only alternative available to Indian democracy. The coalition government at centre had strengthened the federal structure of the Indian political system due to the growing importance of the regional parties in making of the coalition government at the national level. The successful completion of tenure by these coalition governments also reflect that there is wide acceptance of *coalition dharma* by the major political parties and a coalition culture is emerging both at the centre and in the states. Keeping in view the above discussion the study of UPA-I coalition government assumes a lot of importance.

Major Findings

In the light of discussion in preceding chapters the major findings of the study can be highlighted under the following points.

1. The Congress dominated the Indian electoral process at state level till 1967 and at central level till 1989, due to its all embracing and coalitional nature. The Congress Party was the conglomeration of different groups and this plurality created high level competition within the Congress Party. This wide range of social grouping in the ruling party (Congress Party), make it possible for the opposition parties to influence the like minded factions in the Congress Party. Thus, inspite of providing alternative to Congress government opposition political influenced the factional groups of the Congress, which resulted in no alteration of power. The dominance was also largely helped by the Congress's organisation which through its broad networking at the different levels connected the electorate to Congress Party. More importantly, Congress Party as a ruling party in its earlier years had command over resources and it was the organisation of the party which efficiently distributes these resources among existing and potential clients in exchange for their political support. This gives the Congress Party upper hand in bargaining and it was able to influence political decisions in the centre and in states. Furthermore, the political process was not so much competitive in the initial decades and political forces (political parties) till then had not became well organised and assertive. Only 50 percent of voting took place in the Lok Sabha elections which held in the first two decades and out of which it never won majority of votes and its vote share hovered between 45, 48 percent of the total.

However, before the 1967 Lok Sabha election Congress Party witnessed numerous problems like the death of Nehru and Shastri; two successive wars which drained the resources of the country; two severe droughts that put the common man in hardership. Moreover, the Congress Party experienced wide range of split at state level in 1966. The Congress Party got splited in Orissa, Rajasthan, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Punjab. This all resulted in Congress lost power in many states to different political parties. However, the defeat created friction within the Congress Party and subsequently Congress got splited at national level between the two groups, one led by the Indra Gandhi (R) and other led by the Syndicate groups that was named as Congress (O). Under Indira Gandhi the nature of Congress Party got changed. There was

absence of internal factional competition, which led to monopolistic dominance and erosion of openness in the Congress system, decline of institutionalised politics and growth of populist style. The consensus politics of Congress was ignored, and more importance was given to ideological coherence. The party building was ignored and was replaced by populist, charismatic, pyramid power structure. The impact of all these developments Congress lost its grass root contact which resulted in gradual erosion of its social constituencies.

2. The decline of the Congress as a dominant force resulted in emergence and strengthening of multi-party system. Coalition governments were formed at the centre in 1977, 1989, 1996, 1998 but all these coalition governments failed to sustain and provide an effective government. The failure of these coalitions was due to many reasons such as, ideological differences, personality egos, factionalism and defection. Besides these general causes the different coalition government like Janta government, National Front government, United Front government and the coalition government led by BJP in 1998 had their own specific cause for down fall. All these coalition government after defeating their common enemy (Congress) could not decide the crucial point i.e. how to provide a cohesive and stable government to the people. The Janta government failed because Janta Party, which was product of merger of opposition parties maintained their earlier ideological positions and this created friction, hence resulted in the fall of government. The National Front government failed because there was lack of Common Minimum Programme and Conflict Managing Mechanisms. Furthermore, the main party of National Front i.e. Janta Dal was faction ridden. The internal factional fight within the Janta Dal created such conditions which forced the outside supporting party particularly BJP to withdraw the support from the government. The United Front government laid down Common Minimum Programme and put forth Conflict Managing Institutions, but it made one mistake that it kept the main outside supporting party i.e. the Congress out of the Coordination Committee which resulted in breakdown of coordination between the two. Similarly, BJP led coalition in 1998 laid down Common Minimum Programme and Conflict Managing Institutions but it hardly took them seriously. The conflicts were

inevitable in coalition government. What is more important for the stability of coalition government is that how the conflicts and difference were resolved.

3. The decline of the Congress Party created space for the BJP to strengthen itself, which in the beginning relied heavily on the Hindutva ideology. BJP's realised the changing pattern of Indian politics, softened its ideological stands on Uniform Civil Code, Article 370 and Ram Janmbhoomi. This helped the BJP to attract more partners to its alliance. The other factor which was responsible for the attracting state based parties and regional forces towards the BJP led alliance was that the BJP, right up to the 2004 general election, was widely perceived to be electorally successful— an asset as a partner in national and state-wise alliances—and this served to maintain existing coalition tie against a common enemy (Congress) which ultimately culminated into successful completion of tenure by NDA government in 2004. The NDA successfully complete its term, hence discarded the long held notion that coalition governments are by nature unstable. The BJP as disciplined party anchored the NDA coalition government. Moreover, the BJP took the lessons from the failures of the previous coalition governments and thus laid down National Agenda for Governance (NAG). The agenda was based on the principles accommodating the ideological goals of those within the alliance. In order to manage the conflicts within the NDA government different Conflict Managing Institutions were devised. A Coordination Committee was established to see the policy implementation and resolve conflicts. Besides these, inter-ministerial groups called as Group of Ministers (GOM), worked as coordination mechanism to minimise the differences of opinion and conflict within the cabinet was also established.
- 4 The Congress Party remained indifferent towards forging alliances with the regional forces and state based parties and this reluctant attitude of the Congress Party towards coalition government kept it out of power for eight years. However, before 2004 Lok Sabha election Congress under Sonia Gandhi understood the constraints of the party. The Congress Party understood that if it had to check the growing clout of the BJP it had to remain open for the alliance formation. The party approached DMK and struck pre-poll alliance with it. Sonia Gandhi also sink her personal differences with NCP

and made pre-poll alliance with it along with some minor parties like RPI and JD(S). The Congress Party also formed electoral alliance with TRS in Andhra Pradesh, JMM in Jharkhand and most significantly it came into electoral understanding in Bihar with RJD, LJP and with PDP in Jammu and Kashmir. Therefore, the Congress's weak position in these states and presence and formation of new political parties helped the Congress to build alliance which over the years was not possible because the Congress was main strong political opponent to these parties in these states.

Due to the Congress's preference for the alliance formation a loose bipolar contest was witnessed in 2004 Lok Sabha election. Both the national parties forge alliances with the different regional forces and state based parties. This is what differentiates 2004 Lok Sabha elections from its preceding. Furthermore, the 2004 Lok Sabha election reaffirmed the importance of the regional and state based parties in the national politics. Both the NDA and UPA-I, governments couldn't have been formed without the support of these political parties. Therefore, the regionalisation of Indian politics which began in 1996 got also manifested in 2004 Lok Sabha election.

5. The Congress formed coalition government under the banner of United Progressive Alliance which was the conglomeration of the fourteen parties. It was the minority government which was supported from the outside by Left Front. This very outside support was very important for the survival of the UPA-I government and give new orientation to the government policies. The Congress which was leading the UPA-I government took the lesson from the NDA and laid down a National Common Minimum Programme (NCMP), by synchronising the policy stands of internal and external constituents. Different conflicts managing institutions were setup — UPA coordination committee (UPACC) was set up which acted as a platform of consultation and discussion, for not only those who were in the government but also those who supported the government from outside. Complementary to it a specific Coordination Mechanism, the UPA government-Left Coordination Committee (UPALCC) was also set up. the National Advisory Council was established which not worked as watch dog of the NCMP but also advised the government on implementation of NCMP and also provided inputs to the government in

policy formulation. The presence of NAC created dual power centre which in fact worked very well in the UPA-I government because it struck a balance between the Congress' quest for the liberalisation and the Left Fronts pro-poor policies. This was because of the fact that in the UPA-I government, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was in favour of a more open, liberalised economy and on the other hand, Sonia Gandhi supported pro-poor policies and committed to social development in the most inclusive sense. This helped the Left Front to influence the policy of government and sustained its support for the government for four years. Despite this the conflict arose among the constituents of UPA-I government particularly between the UPA-I governments and the Left Front on policy issues and even Left front succeeded in vetoing some economic policies of the government. In short the conflicts were inevitable in coalition government but what is more important for the survival of coalition government is how these conflicts are managed and the UPA-I government showed enough maturity on this dimension of coalition government.

6. The NCMP being product of consensus gave the frame work for governance to the new government. It enlisted the domestic and foreign policy priorities of the government. The policies on Minority Development, Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and the Reservation for OBCs in Higher Education that were discussed in the preceding chapter were targeted towards the lower sections of the society which were the main core social basis of the UPA-I constituents. Framing policies that were targeted toward these groups got the safe passage due to consensus.
7. The UPA-I government's foreign policy was not different from the foreign policy pursued by the NDA. In fact it showed more of continuity than change in the policies pursued by the NDA. The foreign policy of the UPA-I government was product pragmatic assessment of the emerging global environment. The economic dimension of the foreign policy got more importance in it the UPA-I. Like its predecessor, it gave more importance in relations with the US, China and Pakistan, due to the global and regional imperatives. The UPA-I government build its partnership with the US on the foundation laid down by the NDA government. The main intention to further

strengthen relations with the US was to win over the support of US because US was dominant world power and close relations with it could have raised India's status in the world affairs and no other international alliance or network could have match or compensate for the US. However, to get the support of US, the hurdle was Non-proliferation. The Indo-US nuclear deal removed this irritant also.

The UPA-I government sustained the process of strengthening the economic ties with China by increasing trade and investment with it. More importantly, it continued the process to resolve the border issues through negotiations. The UPA-I government tried to construct relations with China on other areas and got greater success but its effort to resolve the border issues failed. Since boundary issue is one of the major irritant in the growing relations between the two nations, it needed to be settled as soon as possible because unless and until this issue is settled the distrust in relations will remain.

UPA-I governments also continued the Composite Dialogue process with Pakistan in order to resolve the outstanding issues and Composite Dialogue process was the best approach. But these talks did not achieve anything substantial because of the derailment in talks due to constant terrorist provocations from Pakistan; the domestic and political conditions in Pakistan also got worsened during the last quarter of 2008 and more importantly, the change in political leadership in Pakistan also contributed to this.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX – I

***¹NATIONAL COMMON MINIMUM PROGRAMME OF THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA, May 2004**

Introduction

The people of India have voted decisively in the 14th Lok Sabha elections for secular, progressive forces, for parties wedded to the welfare of farmers, agricultural labour, weavers, workers and weaker sections of society, for parties irrevocably committed to the daily well-being of the common man across the country.

In keeping with this mandate, the Congress, its pre-poll allies that include the RJD, DMK, NCP, PMK, TRS, JMM, LJP, MDMK, AIMIM, PDP, IUML, RPI (A), RPI (G) and KC(J) have come together to form a United Progressive Alliance (UPA). The UPA government supported by the Left Parties will have six basic principles for governance.

- to preserve, protect and promote social harmony and to enforce the law without fear or favour to deal with all obscurantist and fundamentalist elements who seek to disturb social amity and peace.
- to ensure that the economy grows at least 7-8% per year in a sustained manner over a decade and more and in a manner that generates employment so that each family is assured of a safe and viable livelihood.
- to enhance the welfare and well-being of farmers, farm labour and workers, particularly those in the unorganized sector and assure a secure future for their families in every respect.
- to fully empower women politically, educationally, economically and legally.
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- to provide for full equality of opportunity, particularly in education and employment for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, OBCs and religious minorities.
- to unleash the creative energies of our entrepreneurs, businessmen, scientists, engineers and all other professionals and productive forces of society.
- The UPA makes a solemn pledge to the people of our country: to provide a government that is corruption-free, transparent and accountable at all times, to provide an administration that is responsible and responsive at all times.

Employment

The UPA government will immediately enact a National Employment Guarantee Act. This will provide a legal guarantee for at least 100 days of employment to begin with on asset-creating public works

^{*1}. Government of India. (2004). National Common Minimum Program. Retrieved from [http:// www.pibaizawl.nic.in/cmp.pdf](http://www.pibaizawl.nic.in/cmp.pdf)

programmes every year at minimum wages for at least one able-bodied person in every rural, urban poor and lower middle-class household. In the interim, a massive food-for-work programme will be started.

The UPA government will establish a National Commission to examine the problems facing enterprises in the unorganized, informal sector. The Commission will be asked to make appropriate recommendations to provide technical, marketing and credit support to these enterprises. A National Fund will be created for this purpose.

- The UPA administration will revamp the functioning of the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) and launch new programmes for the modernization of coir, handlooms, powerlooms, garments, rubber, cashew, handicrafts, food processing, sericulture, wool development, leather, pottery and other cottage industries.

The UPA government will give the highest investment, credit and technological priority to the continued growth of agriculture, horticulture, aquaculture, floriculture, afforestation, dairying and agro-processing that will significantly add to the creation of new jobs.

Along with vastly expanding credit facilities for small-scale industry and self-employment, the UPA government will ensure that the services industry will be given all support to fulfill its true growth and employment potential. This includes software and all IT-enabled services, trade, distribution, transport, telecommunications, finance and tourism.

The textile industry will be enabled to meet new challenges imposed by the abolition of quotas under the international multi-fibre agreement in January 2005. Given its special ecological importance worldwide and within the country, the jute industry will receive a fresh impetus in all respects.

Agriculture

The UPA government will ensure that public investment in agricultural research and extension, rural infrastructure and irrigation is stepped up in a significant manner at the very earliest. Irrigation will receive the highest investment priority and all on-going projects will be completed according to a strict time schedule.

The rural cooperative credit system will be nursed back to health. The UPA government will ensure that the flow of rural credit is doubled in the next three years and that the coverage of small and marginal farmers by institutional lending is expanded substantially. The delivery system for rural credit will be reviewed. Immediate steps will be taken to ease the burden of debt and high interest rates on farm loans. Crop and livestock insurance schemes will be made more effective.

The UPA government will introduce a special programme for dryland farming in the arid and semi-arid regions of the country. Watershed and wasteland development programmes will be taken up on a massive scale. Water management in all its aspects, both for irrigation and drinking purposes, will receive urgent attention.

The UPA administration will ensure the fullest implementation of minimum wage laws for farm labour. Comprehensive protective legislation will be enacted for all agricultural workers. Revenue administration will be thoroughly modernized and clear land titles will be established.

The UPA government will bring forward a Constitutional Amendment to ensure the democratic, autonomous and professional functioning of cooperatives.

Controls that depress the incomes of farmers will be systematically removed. Farmers will be given greater say in the organizations that supply inputs to them.

The UPA government will ensure that adequate protection is provided to all farmers from imports, particularly when international prices fall sharply.

The UPA government will ensure that government agencies entrusted with the responsibility for procurement and marketing will pay special attention to farmers in poor and backward states and districts. Farmers all over the country will receive fair and remunerative prices. The terms of trade will be maintained in favour of agriculture.

The UPA government will take steps to ensure that dues to all farmers including sugarcane farmers will be cleared at the earliest.

Education, Health

The UPA government pledges to raise public spending in education to least 6% of GDP with at least half this amount being spent on primary and secondary sectors. This will be done in a phased manner,

The UPA government will introduce a cess on all central taxes to finance the commitment to universalize access to quality basic education. A National Commission on Education will be set up to allocate resources and monitor programmes.

The UPA government will take immediate steps to reverse the trend of communalization of education that had set in the past five years. It will also ensure that all institutions of higher learning and professional education retain their autonomy. The UPA will ensure that nobody is denied professional education because he or she is poor.

Academic excellence and professional competence will be the sole criteria for all appointments to bodies like the Indian Council for Historical Research, Indian Council for Social Science Research, University Grants Commission, National Council for Educational Research and Training, etc. Steps will be taken to remove the communalization of the school syllabus that has taken place in the past five years. A review committee of experts will be set up for this purpose.

A national cooked nutritious mid-day meal scheme funded mainly by the central government, will be introduced in primary and secondary schools. An appropriate mechanism for quality checks will also be set up. The UPA will also universalize the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme to provide a functional anganwadi in every settlement and ensure full coverage for all children. The UPA government will fully back and support all NGO efforts in the area of primary education.

Proper infrastructure will be created in schools for NCC, NSS, physical development, sports and cultural development of all students.

The UPA government will raise public spending on health to at least 2-3% of GDP over the next five years with focus on primary health care. A national scheme for health insurance for poor families will be introduced. The UPA will step up public investment in programmes to control all communicable diseases and also provide leadership to the national AIDS control effort.

The UPA government will take all steps to ensure availability of life-savings drugs at reasonable prices. Special attention will be paid to the poorer sections in the matter of health care. The feasibility of reviving public sector units set up for the manufacture of critical bulk drugs will be re-examined so as to bring down and keep a check on prices of drugs.

Women and Children

The UPA government will take the lead to introduce legislation for one-third reservations for women in vidhan sabhas and in the Lok Sabha. Legislation on domestic violence and against gender discrimination will be enacted.

The UPA government will ensure that at least one-third of all funds flowing into panchayats will be earmarked for programmes for the development of women and children. Village women and their associations will be encouraged to assume responsibility for all development schemes relating to drinking water, sanitation, primary education, health and nutrition.

Complete legal equality for women in all spheres will be made a practical reality, especially by removing discriminatory legislation and by enacting new legislation that gives women, for instance, equal rights of ownership of assets like houses and land.

The UPA government will bring about a major expansion in schemes for micro-finance based on self-help groups, particularly in the backward and ecologically fragile areas of the country.

The UPA government is committed to replicating all over the country the success that some southern and other states have had in family planning. A sharply targeted population control programme will be launched in the 150-odd high-fertility districts. The UPA government recognizes that states that achieve success in family planning cannot be penalized.

The UPA government will protect the rights of children, strive for the elimination of child labour, ensure facilities for schooling and extend special care to the girl child.

Food and Nutrition Security

The UPA will work out, in the next three months, a comprehensive medium-term strategy for food and nutrition security. The objective will be to move towards universal food security over time, if found feasible.

The UPA government will strengthen the public distribution system (PDS) particularly in the poorest and backward blocks of the country and also involve women's and ex-servicemen's cooperatives in its management. Special schemes to reach foodgrains to the most destitute and infirm will be launched. Grain banks in chronically food-scarce areas will be established. Antyodaya cards for all households at risk of hunger will be introduced.

The UPA government will bring about major improvements in the functioning of the Food Corporation of India (FCI) to control inefficiencies that increase the food subsidy burden.

Nutrition programmes, particularly for the girl child will be expanded on a significant scale.

Panchayati Raj

The UPA government will ensure that all funds given to states for implementation of poverty alleviation and rural development schemes by Panchayats are neither delayed nor diverted. Monitoring will be strict. In addition, after consultations with states, the UPA government will consider crediting elected Panchayats with such funds directly.

Devolution of funds will be accompanied by similar devolution of functions and functionaries as well. Regular elections to panchayat bodies will be ensured and the amended Act in respect of the Fifth and Sixth Schedule Areas will be implemented.

The UPA government will ensure that the Gram Sabha is empowered to emerge as the foundation of panchayati raj.

Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes

The UPA will urge the states to make legislation for conferring ownership rights in respect of minor forest produce, including tendu patta, on all those people from the weaker sections who work in the forests.

All reservation quotas, including those relating to promotions, will be fulfilled in a time-bound manner. To codify all reservations, a Reservation Act will be enacted.

The UPA government will launch a comprehensive national programme for minor irrigation of all lands owned by dalits and adivasis. Landless families will be endowed with land through implementation of land ceiling and land redistribution legislation. No reversal of ceilings legislation will be permitted.

The UPA administration will take all measures to reconcile the objectives of economic growth and environmental conservation, particularly as far as tribal communities dependent on forests are concerned.

The UPA is concerned with the growth of extremist violence and other forms of terrorist activity in different states. This is not merely a law-and-order problem, but a far deeper socio-economic issue which will be addressed more meaningfully than has been the case so far. False encounters will not be permitted.

The UPA government will immediately review the overall strategy and programmes for the development of tribal areas to plug loopholes and to work out more viable livelihood strategies. In addition, more effective systems of relief and rehabilitation will be put in place for tribal and other groups displaced by development projects. Tribal people alienated from land will be rehabilitated.

The UPA government is very sensitive to the issue of affirmative action, including reservations, in the private sector. It will immediately initiate a national dialogue with all political parties, industry and other organizations to see how best the private sector can fulfill the aspirations of scheduled caste and scheduled tribe youth.

Eviction of tribal communities and other forest-dwelling communities from forest areas will be discontinued. Cooperation of these communities will be sought for protecting forests and for undertaking social afforestation. The rights of tribal communities over mineral resources, water sources, etc as laid down by law will be fully safeguarded.

Social Harmony, Welfare of Minorities

The UPA is committed to the implementation of the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1992. On Ayodhya, it will await the verdict of the courts, while encouraging negotiations between parties to the dispute for an amicable settlement which must, in turn, receive legal sanction.

The UPA government will enact a model comprehensive law to deal with communal violence and encourage each state to adopt that law to generate faith and confidence in minority communities.

The UPA government will amend the Constitution to establish a Commission for Minority Educational Institutions that will provide direct affiliation for minority professional institutions to central universities.

The UPA will promote modern and technical education among all minority communities. Social and economic empowerment of minorities through more systematic attention to education and employment will be a priority concern for the UPA.

The UPA will establish a National Commission to see how best the welfare of socially and economically backward sections among religious and linguistic minorities, including reservations in education and employment, is enhanced. The Commission will be given six months to submit its report.

Adequate funds will be provided to the National Minorities Development Corporation to ensure its effective functioning. The UPA government will examine the question of providing Constitutional status to the Minorities Commission and will also strive for recognition and promotion of Urdu language under Article 345 and 347 of the Constitution.

The National Integration Council will be restructured and revived so as to fulfill its original objectives. It will meet at least twice a year.

Infrastructure

The UPA attaches the highest priority to the development and expansion of physical infrastructure like roads, highways, ports, power, railways, water supply, sewage treatment and sanitation. Public investment in infrastructure will be enhanced, even as the role of the private sector is expanded. Subsidies will be made explicit and provided through the budget.

The review of the Electricity Act, 2003 will be undertaken in view of the concern expressed by a number of states. The mandatory date of June 10, 2004 for unbundling and replacing the state electricity boards will be extended. The UPA government also reiterates its commitment to an increased role for private generation of power and more importantly power distribution.

Railways constitute the core of our infrastructure. Public investment for its modernization, track renewal and safety will be substantially increased. Railways reforms will be pursued.

The UPA government commits itself to a comprehensive programme of urban renewal and to a massive expansion of social housing in towns and cities, paying particular attention to the needs of slum dwellers. Housing for the weaker sections in rural areas will be expanded on a large scale. Forced eviction and demolition of slums will be stopped and while undertaking urban renewal, care will be taken to see that the urban and semi-urban poor are provided housing near their place of occupation.

The UPA will pay special attention to augmenting and modernizing rural infrastructure consisting of roads, irrigation, electrification, cold-chain and marketing outlets. All existing irrigation projects will be completed with three to four years. Household electrification will be completed in five years.

Water Resources

The UPA government will make a comprehensive assessment of the feasibility of linking the rivers of the country starting with the south-bound rivers. This assessment will be done in a fully consultative manner. It will also explore the feasibility of linking sub-basins of rivers in states like Bihar. The UPA will take all steps to ensure that long-pending inter-state disputes on rivers and water-sharing like the Cauvery Waters dispute are settled amicably at the earliest keeping in mind the interests of all parties to the dispute.

To put an end to the acute drinking water shortage in cities, especially in southern states, desalination plants will be installed all along the Coromandel Coast starting with Chennai. Special problems of habitations in hilly terrains will be addressed immediately.

Providing drinking water to all sections in urban and rural areas and augmenting availability of drinking water sources is an issue of the topmost priority. Harvesting rain water, desilting existing ponds and other innovative mechanisms will be adopted.

Regional Development, Centre-State Relations

The UPA government is committed to redressing growing regional imbalances both among states as well as within states, through fiscal, administrative, investment and other means. It is a matter of concern that regional imbalances have been accentuated by not just historical neglect but also by distortions in Plan allocations and central government assistance. Even in the Tenth Five Year Plan, states like Bihar, Assam and UP have received per capita allocations that are much below the national average. The UPA government will consider the creation of a Backward States Grant Fund that will be used to create productive assets in these states. The central government will also take proactive measures to speed up the industrialization of the eastern and northeastern region.

A structured and transparent approach to alleviate the burden of debt on states will be adopted at the earliest, so as to enable them to increase social sector investments. Interest rates on loans to states will be reduced and the share of states in the single, divisible pool of taxes enhanced.

All non-statutory resource transfers from the central government will be weighted in favour of poor and backward states but with performance parameters as well. A special programme for social and physical infrastructure development in the poorest and most backward districts of the country will be taken up on a priority basis.

The UPA government will take special measures to ensure that regions of India like in the east where the credit:deposit ratio is lagging, is improved substantially.

The UPA government will review the issue of payment of royalties to states in the area of minerals.

From time to time, previous governments have announced special economic packages as, for example, for the northeast, for Bihar and for J&K. For Bihar, Shri Rajiv Gandhi had announced a special development package in 1989 and subsequently another package was announced at the time of its

division in 1999 to make up for the loss of revenue. These packages will be implemented expeditiously.

The UPA government will make the National Development Council (NDC) a more effective instrument of cooperative federalism. The NDC will meet at least twice a year and in different states. Immediately, the NDC will take up the issue of the financial health of states and arrive at a national consensus on specific steps to be taken in this regard. The Inter-State Council will also be activated. All centrally-sponsored schemes except in national priority areas like family planning will be transferred to states.

The UPA government will consider the demand for the formation of a Telangana state at an appropriate time after due consultations and consensus.

The Sarkaria Commission had last looked at the issue of Centre-State relations over two decades ago. The UPA government will set up a new Commission for this purpose keeping in view the sea-changes that have taken place in the polity and economy of India since then.

Long-pending schemes in specific states that have national significance, like the Sethu Samuthiram project, flood control and drainage in North Bihar (that requires cooperation with Nepal as well) and Prevention of Erosion in Padma-Ganga and Bhagirathi flood control in West Bengal will be completed expeditiously. A Flood-prone Area Development Programme will be started and the central government will fully support flood control works in inter-state and international rivers. All existing schemes for drought-prone area development will be reviewed and a single major national programme launched.

Jammu and Kashmir, Northeast

The UPA government is pledged to respecting the letter and spirit of Article 370 of the Constitution that accords a special status to J&K. Dialogue with all groups and with different shades of opinion in J&K will be pursued on a sustained basis, in consultation with the democratically-elected state government. The healing touch policy pursued by the state government will be fully supported and an economic and humanitarian thrust provided to it. The state will be given every assistance to rebuild its infrastructure quickly. New efforts will be launched to bring investments in areas like power, tourism, handicrafts and sericulture.

The UPA government is determined to tackle terrorism, militancy and insurgency in the northeast as a matter of urgent national priority. All northeastern states will be given special assistance to upgrade and expand infrastructure. The Northeastern Council will be strengthened and given adequate professional support. The territorial integrity of existing states will be maintained.

Administrative Reforms

The UPA will set up an Administrative Reforms Commission to prepare a detailed blueprint for revamping the public administration system. E-governance will be promoted on a massive scale. The Right to Information Act will be made more progressive, participatory and meaningful. The Lok Pal Bill will be enacted into law.

The UPA government will take the leadership role to drastically cut delays in High Courts and lower levels of the judiciary. Legal aid services will be expanded. Judicial reforms will be given a fresh momentum.

As part of its commitment to electoral reforms, the UPA will initiate steps to introduce state funding of elections at the earliest.

Industry

The UPA will take all necessary steps to revive industrial growth and put it on a robust footing, through a range of policies including deregulation, where necessary Incentives to boost private investment will be introduced. FDI will continue to be encouraged and actively sought particularly in areas of infrastructure, high-technology and exports and where local assets and employment are created on a significant scale. The country needs and can easily absorb at least two to three times the present level of FDI inflows. Indian industry will be given every support to become productive and competitive. All regulatory institutions will be strengthened to ensure that competition is free and fair. These institutions will be run professionally.

The UPA government will set up a National Manufacturing Competitiveness Council to provide a continuing forum for policy dialogue to energise and sustain the growth of manufacturing industry like food processing, textiles and garments, engineering, consumer goods, pharmaceuticals, capital goods, leather, and IT hardware.

Household and artisanal manufacturing will be given greater technological, investment and marketing support. In the past few years, the most employment-intensive segment of small-scale industry (SSI) has suffered extensively. A major promotional package for the SSI sector will be announced soon. It will be freed from the Inspector Raj and given full credit, technological and marketing support. Infrastructure upgradation in major industrial clusters will receive urgent attention.

Competition in the financial sector will be expanded. Public sector banks will be given full managerial autonomy. Interest rates will provide incentives both to investors and savers, particularly pensioners and senior citizens. The UPA government will never take decisions on the Employers Provident Fund (EPF) without consultations with and approval of the EPF Board. Regulation of urban cooperative banks in particular and of banks in general will be made more effective. LIC and GIC will continue to be in the public sector and will continue to play their social role. In addition, the social obligations imposed by regulatory bodies on private banks and private insurance companies will be monitored and enforced strictly.

Labour

The UPA government is firmly committed to ensure the welfare and well-being of all workers, particularly those in the unorganized sector who constitute 93% of our workforce. Social security, health insurance and other schemes for such workers like weavers, handloom workers, fishermen and fisherwomen, toddy tappers, leather workers, plantation labour, beedi workers, etc will be expanded.

The UPA rejects the idea of automatic hire and fire. It recognizes that some changes in labour laws may be required but such changes must fully protect the interests of workers and families and must take

place after full consultation with trade unions. The UPA will pursue a dialogue with industry and trade unions on this issue before coming up with specific proposals. However, labour laws other than the Industrial Disputes Act that create an Inspector Raj will be re-examined and procedures harmonized and streamlined.

The UPA government firmly believes that labour-management relations in our country must be marked by consultations, cooperation and consensus, not confrontation. Tripartite consultations with trade unions and industry on all proposals concerning them will be actively pursued. Rights and benefits earned by workers, including the right to strike according to law, will not be taken away or curtailed.

Public sector

The UPA government is committed to a strong and effective public sector whose social objectives are met by its commercial functioning. But for this, there is need for selectivity and a strategic focus. The UPA is pledged to devolve full managerial and commercial autonomy to successful, profit-making companies operating in a competitive environment. Generally profit-making companies will not be privatized.

All privatizations will be considered on a transparent and consultative case-by-case basis. The UPA will retain existing “navaratna” companies in the public sector while these companies raise resources from the capital market. While every effort will be made to modernize and restructure sick public sector companies and revive sick industry, chronically loss-making companies will either be sold-off, or closed, after all workers have got their legitimate dues and compensation. The UPA will induct private industry to turn-around companies that have potential for revival.

The UPA government believes that privatization should increase competition, not decrease it. It will not support the emergence of any monopoly that only restrict competition. It also believes that there must be a direct link between privatization and social needs---like, for example, the use of privatization revenues for designated social sector schemes. Public sector companies and nationalized banks will be encouraged to enter the capital market to raise resources and offer new investment avenues to retail investors.

Fiscal Policy

The UPA government commits itself to eliminating the revenue deficit of the centre by 2009, so as to release more resources for investments in social and physical infrastructure. All subsidies will be targeted sharply at the poor and the truly needy like small and marginal farmers, farm labour and the urban poor. A detailed roadmap for accomplishing this will be unveiled in Parliament within 90 days. The UPA government will not cut deficits by reducing or curtailing growth of investment and development outlays.

The UPA government is pledged to the early introduction of VAT after all the necessary technical and administrative homework has been completed, particularly on issues like the integration of service sector taxation and compensation to states. It will initiate measures to increase the tax: GDP ratio by undertaking major tax reforms that expand the base of taxpayers, increase tax compliance and make the

tax administration more efficient. Tax rates will be stable and conducive to growth, compliance and investment. Special schemes to unearth black money and assets will be introduced.

The UPA government will take effective and strong measures to control the price hike of essential commodities. Provisions to deal with speculators, hoarders and black- marketeers under the Essential Commodities Act will not be diluted in any way.

Capital Markets

The UPA government is deeply committed, through tax and other policies, to the orderly development and functioning of capital markets that reflect the true fundamentals of the economy. Financial markets will be deepened. FIIs will continue to be encouraged while the vulnerability of the financial system to the flow of speculative capital will be reduced. Misuse of double taxation agreements will be stopped. Interests of small investors will be protected and they will be given new avenues for safe investment of their savings. SEBI will be further strengthened. Strictest action will be taken against market manipulators and those who try to deliberately engineer market panic.

Economic Reforms

The UPA reiterates its abiding commitment to economic reforms with a human face, that stimulates growth, investment and employment. Further reforms are needed and will be carried out in agriculture, industry and services. The UPA's economic reforms will be oriented primarily to spreading and deepening rural prosperity, to significantly improving the quality of public systems and delivery of public services, to bringing about a visible and tangible difference in the quality of life of ordinary citizens of our country.

Defence, Internal Security

The UPA government will ensure that all delays in the modernization of the armed forces are eliminated and that all funds earmarked for modernization are spent fully at the earliest.

The UPA will set up a new Department of Ex-Servicemens' Welfare in the Ministry of Defence. The long pending issue of one-rank, one-pension will be re-examined.

The UPA government will make the National Security Council a professional and effective institution.

The UPA government is committed to maintaining a credible nuclear weapons programme while at the same time it will evolve demonstrable and verifiable confidence-building measures with its nuclear neighbours. It will take a leadership role in promoting universal, nuclear disarmament and working for a nuclear weapons-free world.

The UPA has been concerned with the manner in which POTA has been grossly misused in the past two years. There will be no compromise in the fight against terrorism. But given the abuse of POTA that has taken place, the UPA government will repeal it, while existing laws are enforced strictly.

The UPA government will take the strictest possible action, without fear or favour, against all those individuals and organizations who spread social discord, disturb social amity, propagate religious bigotry and communal hatred. The law of the land will be enforced effectively.

Science and Technology

The UPA government will follow policies and introduce programmes that strengthen India's vast science and technology infrastructure. Science and technology development and application missions will be launched in key areas, covering both global leadership and local transformation. The UPA government will mobilize the skills and expertise of Indian scientists, technologists and other professionals working abroad for institution-building and other projects in the country.

Energy Security

The UPA government will immediately put in place policies to enhance the country's energy security particularly in the area of oil. Overseas investments in the hydrocarbon industry will be actively encouraged. An integrated energy policy linked with sustainable development will be put in place.

Foreign Policy, International Organisations

The UPA government will pursue an independent foreign policy keeping in mind its past traditions. This policy will seek to promote multi-polarity in world relations and oppose all attempts at unilateralism.

The UPA government will give the highest priority to building closer political, economic and other ties with its neighbours in South Asia and to strengthening SAARC. Particular attention will be paid to regional projects in the area of water resources, power and ecological conservation. Dialogue with Pakistan on all issues will be pursued systematically and on a sustained basis. The UPA will support peace talks in Sri Lanka that fulfill the legitimate aspirations of Tamils and religious minorities within the territorial integrity and solidarity of Sri Lanka. Outstanding issues with Bangladesh will be resolved. Intensive dialogue will be initiated with Nepal for developing water resources to mutual advantage.

Trade and investment with China will be expanded further and talks on the border issue pursued seriously. Relationships with East Asian countries will be intensified. Traditional ties with West Asia will be given a fresh thrust. The UPA government reiterates India's decades-old commitment to the cause of the Palestinian people for a homeland of their own. Steps will be taken to withdraw Indian mercenaries from Iraq while further recruitment for this purpose will be banned.

Even as it pursues closer engagement and relations with the USA, the UPA government will maintain the independence of India's foreign policy position on all regional and global issues. The UPA is committed to deepening ties with Russia and Europe as well.

In keeping with the stance adopted by the late Shri Murasoli Maran at Doha, the UPA government will fully protect the national interest, particularly of farmers, in all WTO negotiations. Commitments made earlier will be adhered to, even as efforts are mounted to ensure that all agreements reflect our concerns fully particularly in the area of intellectual property and agriculture. The UPA government will use the flexibility afforded in existing WTO agreements to fully protect Indian agriculture and industry. The UPA government will play a proactive role in strengthening the emerging solidarity of developing countries in the shape of G-20 in the WTO.

Official Language

The UPA government will set up a committee to examine the question of declaring all languages in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution as official languages. In addition, Tamil will be declared as a classical language.

A Final Word

This is a common minimum programme (CMP) for the UPA government. It is, by no means, a comprehensive agenda. It is a starting point that highlights the main priorities, policies and programmes. The UPA is committed to the implementation of the CMP. This CMP is the foundation for another CMP—collective maximum performance.